Evolution of the Melanesian Bishopric*

SELWYN'S involvement in Melanesia is usually portrayed as having resulted, with an almost epic inevitability, from a clerical error in his letters patent. Tucker, in the standard biography published in the year after Selwyn's death, said that the Bishop 'took with amused gravity the clerical error which made his diocese to stretch from the 50th degree of S. latitude to the 34th degree of north, instead of (as was intended), south latitude; and in compliance with the injunction of Archbishop Howley, launched in 1849 a small yacht of 21 tons on these unknown seas, and became the pioneer and apostle of Melanesia.' Curteis, writing ten years later, but with the advantage of having known his subject personally, said that Selwyn 'lodged no protest at all; but with a humorous smile accepted, in real earnest, the enormous jurisdiction thus inadvertently committed to him.' As Tucker could be presumed to have heard the story from Selwyn's family and friends, while Curteis could have been told it by Selwyn himself, it is scarcely surprising that later writers have repeated and reinforced this version of the Melanesian Mission's origins. Yet Selwyn in his middle years vigorously denied that any error was involved: the north latitude in the draft patent had been pointed out by him to the Colonial Office officials, its presence in the final document had therefore been accepted by him knowingly and willingly.

All of these versions of events imply that Selwyn was aware of the north latitude in his patent from the very beginning. Contemporary documents suggest, however, that this was not the case, that the penny dropped only after Selwyn's return from his first foray into Melanesian waters in H.M.S. Dido. Moreover, the fact that Selwyn's subsequent voyagings in Melanesia were clearly uninhibited by the longitudinal limits of his patent suggests that all the talk about the north latitude was irrelevant, except when it suited him to use it as a justification for

*This is the written version of a lecture, one of a series of Selwyn Centennial Lectures given by a panel at St John's College, Auckland, in June and July 1978, organized by the Reverend W.E. Limbrick, the Reverend Dr K.N. Booth, and the writer.

1 H.W. Tucker, Memoir of the Life and Episcopate of George Augustus Selwyn, London, [1879], I, 73.
activities which were the subject of very considerable criticism at the time, both in England and in New Zealand.

So far as posterity is concerned, the chief effect of that maverick north latitude has been to obscure the ideological basis of Selwyn’s involvement in missionary activity beyond the diocese of New Zealand, an involvement which, in his own eyes and in those of some of his contemporaries, was fundamental to the role of a bishop outside Britain.

When advocating the establishment of a fund for endowing colonial bishoprics, Bishop Blomfield of London said in 1840 that an episcopal church without a bishop was a contradiction in terms. Yet no British colony had had a bishop until after the American War of Independence. The first bishop of the Anglican Communion outside Britain was an American, Seabury of Connecticut, consecrated in Aberdeen in 1784, but once the newly independent States of America had their own bishops the same could no longer be denied to colonies which had remained loyal to the Crown. By 1840 ten colonial bishoprics had been founded, four in what is now Canada, three in India, two in the West Indies, and one in Australia. New Zealand was next, the first beneficiary of the Colonial Bishoprics Fund.

By 1841 Anglican missionaries had been working in New Zealand for a quarter of a century without any episcopal supervision, apart from a brief visit to the Bay of Islands, at the close of 1838, of Bishop Broughton of Sydney. But as Broughton explained to a friend, that visit was not primarily as a supervisory one: ‘I was determined to prove to the Romanists by practical evidence’, he said, ‘that they are guilty of injustice in affirming as they constantly do . . . that we neither have, nor can exercise any episcopal powers except such as are derived from our letters patent under the Great Seal.’ He went on to explain that, within the Queen’s dominions, he would never exercise episcopal functions except within the limits which the Queen appointed: that was what letters patent were for, not to confer spiritual powers but to define the area within which they should be exercised. But beyond British territory, said Broughton, every bishop had an inherent right, by virtue of the powers conferred upon him at consecration, to officiate episcopally ‘wherever the good of the Church may be promoted by his doing so, and there has been no episcopate previously established upon which he would be an intruder.’ During his visit to the Bay of Islands, Broughton exercised episcopal functions outside his own diocese and beyond British territory by consecrating a burial ground, ordaining a priest, and administering confirmation.

Broughton’s views would have been shared by many High Churchmen of the time, but they were not the views of the Law Officers of the Crown nor of the Whig Government in power when plans to appoint a New

4 Broughton to Joshua Watson, [1840], quoted in E.T. Whittington, William Grant Broughton, Bishop of Australia, Sydney, 1936, pp.97-98.
Zealand bishop came to fruition. Because of his involvement with the New Zealand Church Society the bishopric was offered to the Reverend William Selwyn. When he declined it was offered to his younger brother George, then a curate at Windsor and tutor at Eton College.

George Selwyn had recently made the acquaintance of the Bishop of New Jersey, George Washington Doane, who was then on a visit to England. Doane, ten years older than Selwyn and already a bishop for nine years, was a man very much in the Selwyn mould: a High Churchman, an eloquent and enthusiastic exponent of the missionary role of the Church, a man of magnetic personality and great social gifts. As is clear from their correspondence at the time, the two men were immediately attracted to one another and found much to talk about relating to Selwyn’s ‘plans for Missions’. When the New Zealand appointment was announced, Doane sent Selwyn not only his congratulations but also a copy of his sermon ‘The Missionary Bishop’. ‘When I tell you’, wrote Selwyn in reply, ‘that your sermon on the Consecration of the First Missionary Bishop, struck upon the hearts of myself and my wife, as a confirmation of all that we had felt, and as suggesting many high and holy thoughts, which had escaped us, you will I am sure accept this as the best practical tribute of thanks, which we can offer.’

To the young bishop-elect of New Zealand, ‘about to go to the part of the globe, which is most distant of all from his own country’, the sermon sounded a clarion call: ‘this is what is meant by A MISSIONARY BISHOP—a Bishop sent forth by the Church, not sought for of the Church—going before, to organize the Church, not waiting till the Church has partially been organized—a leader, not a follower’.

In all colonial bishoprics the appointment of a bishop had been prompted by the need to provide episcopal supervision of clergy and congregations already established. Jackson Kemper’s appointment to pioneer Anglican expansion into Missouri and Indiana was thus a complete reversal of the usual procedure. ‘As every minister of Christ is a Missionary,’ said Doane, ‘so are the Bishops, as His chief ministers, eminently Missionaries—sent out by Christ himself to preach the Gospel—sent to preach it in a wider field—sent to preach it under a

5 Doane and Selwyn met at least twice, on 7 July 1841, apparently at Fulham, and again later in the month at Eton. See William Croswell Doane, The Life and Writings of George Washington Doane, New York, 1860, I, 282, 358. I am indebted to Professor Emeritus Robert W. Kenny of Brown University, Rhode Island, for locating a copy of this work and supplying me with photocopies, also to the Rev. W.E. Limbrick for alerting me to the existence of a connection between Doane and Selwyn.

6 The ‘First Missionary Bishop’ was Jackson Kemper, consecrated at Philadelphia in 1835 to exercise episcopal functions in Missouri and Indiana.

7 Selwyn to Doane, 22 July 1841, quoted in Doane, I, 264-5.

8 ibid.

higher responsibility—sent to preach it at great hazards of self-denial and self sacrifice, and under circumstances more appalling of arduous labour and anxious care'.

There can be little doubt that this American concept of a missionary bishop made an immediate appeal to Selwyn. If he had not previously envisaged an episcopal role for himself beyond the bounds of his diocese-to-be, he did so now. A fortnight after reading Doane's sermon he was requested by the Colonial Office to place himself in communication with the Queen's Advocate, Sir John Dodson, who was to prepare the draft of his letters patent. In due course Dodson informed the Secretary of State for the Colonies that he had conferred with Selwyn, and had prepared a draft 'for erecting the Islands of New Zealand into a Bishops See', and for appointing Selwyn to be the bishop thereof. Dodson concluded his letter with this comment: 'Mr. Selwyn expressed a desire that the Right to exercise his Episcopal Functions should be extended to certain other Islands not comprized within the Colony of New Zealand or indeed within any other Part of Her Majesty's Dominions, but I am of opinion that in the existing state of the Law no such authority can be legally conferred.'

There was a brief hiatus in the Colonial Office, following a change of government. Selwyn asked to be allowed to look over the draft before it was 'finally executed'. It was forwarded to him on 16 September and returned by him a week later, together with eighteen pages of proposed amendments.

Of the many provisions in the draft patent to which Selwyn objected, two are directly relevant to the present discussion: first, he was to be constituted a bishop 'to perform all the functions peculiar & appropriate to the office of Bishop within the limits of his See, but not elsewhere'; and second, the patent was framed, Selwyn claimed, 'so as to imply a direct grant of Spiritual authority from the Crown.' In each instance, his grounds for objection were that a bishop's spiritual powers were con-
veyed to him by consecration. He made no reference to the latitudinal or longitudinal limits of his See.16

Before any response could reasonably be expected to his budget of objections, Selwyn wrote again to the Colonial Office, trying to hurry things up. The Archbishop of Canterbury, he informed Lord Stanley, had fixed 10 October for his consecration. Being unwilling to cause any delay ‘by insisting upon the alterations’ set out in his previous communication, he took ‘the liberty of stating’ that it would be more satisfactory to him if Lord Stanley would direct that the Queen’s mandate for the consecration should be issued, and that the question of the letters patent should be reserved for the consideration of the Law Officers of the Crown, with the assistance, he suggested, of Mr Justice Coleridge. He pledged himself to acquiesce in their decision, at the same time declaring: ‘The old precedents are acknowledged to be so full of errors, that I hope to be excused for not placing much confidence in them.’17

Reaction in the Colonial Office was swift. The issue of the patent must precede the consecration, the Permanent Under-Secretary, James Stephen, advised, otherwise the bishop, once consecrated, could negotiate about the terms of his patent ‘with advantages much greater than before his own Episcopal character is created’. Moreover Selwyn’s letter had implied a doubt whether he would take the bishopric ‘if the Letters Patent be drawn up in terms which he cannot approve’. Therefore it was essential that the terms should be definitely arranged before he was made bishop.18 Lord Stanley concurred,19 and Selwyn was informed that any alteration to the draft would have to be referred back to the Law Officers of the Crown for their opinion, and that the issue of the patent must precede the consecration.20

Selwyn expressed his readiness to accept the patent ‘as now framed’, at the same time informing Lord Stanley that ‘whatever meaning the words of it may be construed to bear, I conceive that those functions, which are merely spiritual are conveyed to the Bishop by the act of consecration alone’. As for the other changes he had proposed, he expressed his conviction that the efficient administration of the diocese would have been promoted by their adoption.21

But this in no way ended the debate, which Selwyn carried on in person in a succession of visits to the Colonial Office, as is evident from the

16 Copy, in Selwyn’s hand, of Edward Badeley and James R. Hope to Selwyn, September 1841, setting out ‘the objects of the alterations which you desire to have made in the Draft Patent for the Bishopric of New Zealand.’ ibid., pp.216-8b.
18 Minute, Stephen to Hope, 29 September [1841], ibid., p.205b.
19 Minute, 3 October [1841], ibid.
21 Selwyn to Stanley, 4 October 1841, ibid., pp.238-238b.
account of his wife’s cousin, Caroline Palmer. With the aid of his legal advisers, he succeeded in gaining a last minute concession, that he would not be restricted to three archdeacons, one for the North Island, one for the South Island and one for Stewart Island. From the point of view of the administration of his future diocese it was a useful, indeed a necessary amendment, and one which might well have been made earlier, and without fuss. Instead it was a hard won point, wrung out of the Colonial Office at the very last minute, on 14 October, the day the patent was finally issued. Caroline Palmer’s account runs:

Things had gone better at the Colonial Office too, on arriving he said he found Mr. James Hope, & Mr. Baddely doing his work for him opening a strong fire on the worthy Knight—Sir John Dodson. He joined the crusade, & they proved victorious, & some of the absurd restrictions are removed. The Geographical Clerks having perceived the absurdity wch. he had in vain attempted to make plain to the Comprehension of the Secretaries themselves—that the three divisions of the Islands being in proportion to Gt. Britain Ireland & the Isle of Wight, it was rather absurd to restrict his appointment of Archdeacons to one for each Island.

Had Selwyn’s manner been less overbearing, this and perhaps others of his objections might have been met more readily. Basic to the whole difficulty, however, was the Tractarian bogey. When Selwyn’s proposed amendments were received at the Colonial Office James Stephen minuted the file: ‘I think it impossible not to see that the proposed alterations raise problems of great significance and difficulty. They touch on some of the points of Ecclesiastical Govt., to which certain popular discussions of our own time have imparted a more than common interest, and above all on the obscure relation which subsists between the Sovereign and the Anglican Church.’ Stephen’s wariness was understandable. Selwyn’s legal advisers were well known Tractarians and the tenor of his own relations with the Colonial Office had marked him out as a man to be watched.

None watched him more closely than James Stephen. In an astringent minute on Selwyn’s last letter to the Colonial Office before leaving England Stephen wrote:

I would suggest the expediency of pointing out to the Bishop that after he shall have reached his Diocese he must correspond with the Govt. here, not directly, but through the channel of the Govr. This is a regulation which all Bishops dislike and try to avoid, but incessant inconvenience is the result. In the case of the

22 Caroline Palmer, ‘Account of the last days at Eton by George Augustus and Sarah Selwyn, 1841’, Micro MS 50, Alexander Turnbull Library (ATL), Wellington.
25 Stephen to Hope, 25 September [1841], CO 209/13, p.219b.
26 James R. Hope and Edward Badeley.
Bishop of New Zealand it is peculiarly necessary to observe, partly on account of his great distance, & partly because he is so extremely unacquainted with the conduct of affairs and with all kinds of Secular business, that without the intervention of the Govr. it wd. be scarcely possible ever to make out his real meaning. At least no man whether in speech or in writing appears more obscure to me.  

G. W. Hope, the Parliamentary Under Secretary to whom Stephen’s minute was addressed, while agreeing that colonial bishops should communicate with the home government only through the governor, disagreed with Stephen’s view that there was anything in Selwyn’s character ‘to call peculiarly for this regulation’, but added, ‘except at entering my protest it is perhaps no use to embark in a discussion on this head’.  

Selwyn was consecrated in the chapel of Lambeth Palace by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishops of London, Lincoln and Barbados on 17 October, only a week later than originally planned. Of his wish to exercise episcopal functions in islands ‘not comprized within the Colony of New Zealand or indeed within any other Part of Her Majesty’s Dominions’, the Queen’s Advocate had said in August 1841 that ‘in the existing state of the Law no such authority can be legally conferred.’ But in October Parliament passed an Act under which authority to exercise episcopal functions beyond British territory could be conferred. The primary purpose of this legislation was to facilitate the appointment of Michael Solomon Alexander as Bishop of the United Church of England and Ireland in Jerusalem. Three weeks after his own consecration Selwyn was one of Alexander’s consecrating bishops, but it seems he may afterwards have regretted his involvement, for the Jerusalem bishopric aroused considerable criticism, especially in Tractarian circles.  

On 30 November 1841 the Archbishop of Canterbury, writing at the request of ‘such of the bishops as attended the last meeting of the Committee appointed to manage the funds for the endowment of bishoprics  

27 Stephen to Hope, 18 November [1841], CO 209/13, pp.252b-253.  
28 Hope to Stanley, 19 November 1841, ibid., pp.254-254b.  
29 Dodson to Russell, 30 August 1841, CO 209/12, pp.161-161b.  
30 5 Vict. c.6, sometimes referred to as the Jerusalem Bishops Act. The short title, ‘The Bishops in Foreign Countries Act’, was not given until 1896.  
31 Tucker, I, 81, said Selwyn’s participation in the consecration ‘caused some surprise to his friends, and the mention of it in these pages may be a matter of regret to those who here learn of it for the first time.’ Tucker’s very circumspect account of the consecration, although it purports to give Selwyn’s version of events, did not quote Selwyn himself, but some other unnamed person, writing in his defence. This is not made clear by R.W. Greaves, ‘The Jerusalem Bishopric, 1841’, English Historical Review, LXIV, 251 (July 1949), 344, whose only source of information on Selwyn’s involvement seems to have been Tucker.  
32 Newman, who was outspoken in his criticism at the time, later categorized the Jerusalem bishopric as ‘the third blow, which finally shattered my faith in the Anglican Church.’ Apologia Pro Vita Sua, ed. Martin J. Svanglic, Oxford, 1967, p.133.
in the colonies', addressed a valedictory letter to Selwyn 'expressive of their personal respect, and of the deep interest they take in your high and holy mission.' The new bishop would have 'the great satisfaction of laying the foundation of civilized society in New Zealand, on the basis of an Apostolical Church and a pure religion.' On his arrival he would be surrounded by a body of clergy prepared under his direction 'to minister to the spiritual wants of the settlers, and to impart the blessings of the Christian faith to the native tribes.'

As the population is multiplied, the number of ministers will be increased in proportion, and the incorporation of all classes within the pale of our Church may, with the blessing of God, be the happy result of their exertions. Nor can our views be confined within the limits at present assigned to the exercise of your spiritual authority. Your mission acquires an importance exceeding all calculation when your See is regarded as the central point of a system extending its influence in all directions, as a fountain diffusing the streams of salvation over the islands and coasts of the Pacific: as a luminary to which nations enslaved and debased by barbarous and bloody superstitions will look for light.

And so on, for several more paragraphs. To Selwyn, his imagination already fired by the vision of a missionary role beyond the confines of his diocese, this portion of Archbishop Howley’s long-winded letter was to become a specific 'charge', to which in later years he frequently made reference, culminating in his citation of it, as if it had been an authorizing document, in the official record of John Coleridge Patteson's consecration.

In his own first charge to his clergy, delivered at St John's College in September 1847, Selwyn outlined the wider role which he looked to the College to fulfil: 'I live in hope that we may be permitted to frame a uniform system of education for the youth of all Polynesia; that from New Zealand, as from a Missionary centre, the strictest knowledge, and the most confirmed faith, may be carried back by our students to their distant homes. We cannot consider our work accomplished till every dialect in the South Sea has its representative in our Missionary College.' East of New Zealand, he said, there was not an island to which the gospel had not been preached; but with an all-embracing sweep he indicated 'a dark expanse' still to be converted to the faith: 'Borneo, Celebes, New Guinea, and all the islands on our north'. He enunciated his missionary philosophy: 'that however inadequate a Church may be to

33 Howley to Selwyn, quoted in full in Tucker, I, 84-86.
34 'Whereas in a Valedictory Letter written by the late [Archbishop Howley] . . . We were directed not to confine our views within the limits of the New Zealand Islands, but to regard the See of New Zealand as the central point of a system extending its influence in all directions over the Islands and Coasts of the Pacific . . .' Consecration deed, Anglican Church Office Archives, Auckland.
its own internal wants, it must on no account suspend its Missionary duties; that this is in fact the circulation of its life’s blood, which would lose its vital power if it never flowed forth to the extremities, but curdled at the heart.\footnote{ibid., p.20.}

The opportunity to make his first reconnaissance into that ‘dark expanse’ came a few months later, as temporary chaplain in H.M.S. 

\textit{Dido}. In the course of this voyage Selwyn wrote to his father from Tonga early in January 1848, ‘Lest you should think that I have gone out of the range of my own duty, I must tell you that the Archbishop of Canterbury in his valedictory letter to me, commended to my notice the progress of Christianity “throughout the Coasts and Islands of the Pacific”; a charge, which the troubled state of New Zealand has hitherto prevented me from attempting to fulfil.’\footnote{Selwyn to W. Selwyn sen., [6 January] 1848, facsimile in Tucker, II.}

In a later letter, written in June 1848 several months after his return to New Zealand, Selwyn informed his father that the delay of the \textit{Dido} at Samoa had ‘left but little time for that part in which I was particularly interested, as forming part of my own Diocese by the geographical definition of boundaries in my Letters Patent.’\footnote{Selwyn to W. Selwyn sen., 17 June 1848, in Letters from the Bishop of New Zealand and Others, 1, 443, typescript, Auckland Institute and Museum (AIM)}

The extension of New Zealand into northern latitudes had first been perpetrated in a proclamation issued by Captain Hobson on 21 May 1840.\footnote{Enclosure, Hobson to Secretary of State, 25 May 1840, CO 209/7, p.62.}

In New Zealand the error was quickly detected, a correctly worded proclamation being printed and a copy sent to the Colonial Office,\footnote{The correctly worded printed proclamation, with an annotation by Hobson dated 19 June 1840, was forwarded to the Colonial Office apparently as an enclosure in the duplicate despatch, dated 23 [sic] May 1840. G 30/1, p.99 NA. The duplicate despatch was received at the Colonial Office on 14 January 1841 but Hobson’s annotation on the printed proclamation appears not to have been noticed.} but in Whitehall the latitudinal solecism had not been noticed and in consequence letters patent dated 16 November 1840 erecting New Zealand as a separate colony—the New Zealand Charter, as this document is often called—described the territory involved as ‘lying between the 34th Degree 30 Minutes North to the 47th Degree 10 Minutes South Latitude, & between the 166th Degree 5 Minutes to the 179th Degree of East Longitude.’\footnote{CO 380/122, p. 16.}

A fortnight after Bishop Selwyn had sailed for New Zealand with his letters patent, in which the charter with its north latitude was cited,\footnote{ibid., pp.260-1.} a despatch from Hobson pointing out the error in the charter was received in the Colonial Office.\footnote{Hobson to Secretary of State, 26 May 1841, and minutes thereon, CO 209/9, pp.102-4.} New letters patent for the colony of New
Zealand were therefore issued in April 1842, the opportunity being taken not only to alter the northern limit of the colony to 33rd degree south latitude, but also to include the Chathams and other islands to the southward within the colony of New Zealand, thus enabling the new patent to be described as 'amending and enlarging the Boundaries of the Colony of New Zealand as laid down in the Letters Patent of the 16 Nov. 1840 under which the Colony was established.' The previous limits of the colony were specifically revoked by the new patent, but whenever it was necessary in later letters patent relating to New Zealand to cite the instrument by which New Zealand had become a separate colony, the quotation from the document of November 1840 inevitably included that maverick north latitude.

If Selwyn had noticed the north latitude in his patent and, as a result, had accepted 'the enormous jurisdiction thus inadvertently committed to him', he would hardly have written to his sister in July 1843, 'The journey which I purpose (God willing) to undertake next summer, will I hope, complete my acquaintance with my Diocese, by bringing under my observation the middle Islands, and Stewart's and the Chatham Islands'. If he had regarded the definition of boundaries in his patent as determining his future field of missionary work would he, in 1847, have referred expansively to Borneo, Celebes and New Guinea, all well outside its longitudinal limits?

The letter to his father from Tonga in January 1848 mentioned only Archbishop Howley's letter as justification for his voyage in the Dido. The reference, six months later, to a part of the Pacific 'as forming part of my own Diocese by the geographical definition of boundaries in my Letters Patent' appears to have been Selwyn's first mention of the boundaries of his diocese as defined in his patent. Although negative evidence must be treated with caution, there is a strong presumption that the north latitude in his patent came to Selwyn's notice only in the interval between the two letters to his father of January and June 1848.

Selwyn's exchange of duties with the Dido's chaplain had been arranged by Sir George Grey. Was it Grey who alerted him to the north latitude in the New Zealand Charter and its citation in his own letters patent? This may well have been so, for both Grey's commission as Governor-in-Chief, and the New Zealand Act of 1846, also cited the New Zealand Charter with its north latitude upon which Grey himself was

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45 This point is not, I think, made clear in Angus Ross's discussion of the subject in New Zealand Aspirations in the Pacific in the Nineteenth Century, Oxford, 1964, pp.14-17.
46 Letters from the Bishop of New Zealand and Others, I, 75. Selwyn's mention of the Chathams suggests that at this juncture he accepted that the boundaries of his diocese were those of the colony as amended and enlarged by the letters patent of April 1842, which had been published in the New Zealand Government Gazette, 1 November 1842.
later to base territorial claims for New Zealand.**

But whenever Selwyn noticed the north latitude in his own patent, his desire to exercise episcopal functions in ‘certain other Islands not comprized within the Colony of New Zealand’ clearly predated the drafting of that document.*** And from his objections to other matters in the draft, there can be no doubt that the theological basis of his missionary work in Melanesia was the same as that on which Broughton had defended his right to officiate episcopally in pre-colonial New Zealand.

As a matter of practical politics, however, Selwyn took pains to build up secular support for the mission. The Royal Navy was a powerful ally. In the spring of 1849 Selwyn sailed for the islands in his own vessel, the 21-ton Undine, bringing back with him to St John’s ‘the first set of Melanesians, five in number, from the Loyalties’.** He returned them to their island homes the following winter. On both these voyages, Selwyn sailed for part of the time in company with a man-of-war, not only for protection,*** but also, perhaps, for the visible authority a naval escort gave to his presence in the islands.** Naval co-operation was carried a stage further later in the year when, on his own initiative, Captain Erskine of H.M.S. Havannah brought four more Melanesians from the islands to the College.***

Early in September 1850 Selwyn formally applied to Governor Grey for permission to leave his diocese ‘for a period of two months for the purpose of attending at a Metropolitan Visitation to be held at Sydney on the 1st of October 1850.’*** The main purpose of the meeting, which continued throughout the month of October, was to discuss colonial church government,** but Selwyn hoped also to persuade the Australian bishops to endorse his Melanesian operations and, as he put it to Edward Coleridge, to ‘draw resources if possible from all the dioceses.’ He asked Coleridge to do what he could ‘for our Board of Missions, for the benefit of all the “News”.’ This phrase, ‘all the “News”’, was to become a

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**In 1853 as regards New Caledonia and in 1878 as regards the New Hebrides. Ross, pp.17-18.

***See n. 13 above.

****S.H. Selwyn, p.35.

*****Selwyn to W. Selwyn sen., 15 September 1849, Letters from the Bishop of New Zealand and Others, I, 219.

******Writing to Gladstone in October 1848, Selwyn tended to give the opposite impression, that his presence in the Undine, serving as tender to a man-of-war, would assist in the establishment of ‘peaceful and Christian relations with all the Islanders’. Selwyn, Letters to Gladstone, BM Add. MS 44299, Micro MS 426, ATL.

*******These were the four listed as coming in 1850 in Calendar of St. John’s College corrected to October 31, 1850, Bishop’s Auckland, 1850, p.[5].

********Selwyn to Grey, 6 September 1850, GL:NZ, S 16, Auckland Public Library (AP). See also Gov. Grey to Earl Grey, 8 September 1850, G 25/4, No 95 and Earl Grey to Gov. Grey, 2 February 1851, G 1/27, No 10, NA.

favourite with Selwyn. He listed them now for Coleridge’s benefit: New South Wales, New Zealand, New Hebrides, New Caledonia, New Britain, New Hanover, New Ireland, New Guinea. But of all the ‘News’, only New Hebrides and part of New Caledonia, in addition to New Zealand, lay within the longitudinal limit cited in his patent.

Selwyn was to gain massive support in Sydney for his missionary operations. The Australasian Board of Missions was formed at a largely attended public meeting on 29 October: 1300 people were present, including the bishops, with Broughton in the chair. The Bishops of New Zealand and Newcastle were ‘requested to act as missionary bishops’, and St John’s College, New Zealand, ‘was appointed provisionally the centre of their Melanesian Missionary Operations’. Donations to the cause were on so liberal a scale that a 100-ton vessel could be purchased for the work of the mission.

On 10 June 1851, in a pastoral letter, Selwyn announced the arrival in Auckland ‘of my coadjutor the Bishop of Newcastle’ (W. Tyrrell) in the schooner Border Maid, ‘so liberally presented to me by the Bishops, Clergy, and Laity of the Dioceses of Sydney and Newcastle’, and invited the co-operation of church members in the establishment of a diocesan board in connection with the Australasian Board of Missions. In doing so, Selwyn drew attention ‘to the reasons which have induced me to undertake the practical charge of the New Caledonian Mission.’ No reference was made to his letters patent, the whole emphasis being laid on the ‘parting charge’ of the late Archbishop of Canterbury ‘in the name of the Archbishops acting as Trustees of the Colonial Bishoprics Fund.’ He quoted from Howley’s letter of November 1841:

Nor can our views be confined within the limits at present assigned to the exercise of your spiritual authority. Your Mission acquires an importance exceeding all calculation, when your See is regarded, as the central point of a System extending its influence in all directions, as a fountain diffusing the streams of Salvation over the Islands and Coasts of the Pacific; as a luminary to which natives enslaved and debased by barbarous and bloody superstitions, will look for light.

Even on its own, it is difficult to reconcile this passage with Selwyn’s reference to ‘Missionary duties thus entrusted to me by the Archbishops and Bishops of the English Church.’ Read in the context of the whole

56 Selwyn to Coleridge, 2 September 1850, quoted in Tucker, I, 346.
57 P.A. Micklem, citing Sydney Morning Herald, 2 November 1850, in Whitington, p.259.
58 ibid, p.262.
59 Calendar of St. John’s College corrected to October 31, 1850, p.[5].
60 Writing to Gladstone on 2 December 1850 Selwyn said ‘near to’ £1000 had been raised. BM Add. MS 44299, Micro MS 426, ATL.
61 Pastoral Letter of the Bishop of New Zealand to the Members of the Church of England in the Archdeaconry of Waitamata, Whit Tuesday, 1851.
62 For the whole text of Archbishop Howley’s letter see Tucker, I, 84-86.
of Howley’s letter it may reasonably be doubted whether the quoted passage, any more than the rest of the Archbishop’s rolling rhetoric, was intended as more than general good wishes and pious hopes.

During August and September Selwyn and Tyrrell together visited various islands in the *Border Maid* but in late 1852 the schooner was sold, having proved too costly to maintain.63 Australian participation in the Melanesian Mission went into recess until revived by Patteson in the 1860s. Selwyn and Tyrrell had been fellow oarsmen in the Lady Margaret boat at Cambridge64 but they do not seem to have been able to pull so well together as missionary bishops.65

Meanwhile, in England, the question was being asked whether Selwyn’s voyaging in the islands was not resulting in the neglect of his own diocese. ‘Pray inform all complainants’, he wrote to Edward Coleridge, ‘that my diocese extends from the Auckland Islands to the Carolines; i.e., from 50 south latitude to 34 north latitude’. And if it should be said that the extension into northern latitudes, ‘which has been copied into all the Patents and Public Documents of New Zealand’, was a clerical error, then, he said, ‘I rest upon a surer ground in the parting charge of the dear archbishop now gone to his rest, who, with the bishops forming the Board for Colonial Bishoprics, consigned to me, in 1841, the oversight over the progress of religion in “the Coasts and Islands of the Pacific”—a charge which neither his successor, nor any other Church authority has revoked’.66 Thus Selwyn claimed triple authority for his involvement in Melanesia: the Archbishop’s ‘charge’, the unanimous voice of the Bishops of Australasia, and the geographical boundaries in his letters patent. But in asserting that his diocese stretched from the Auckland Islands to the Carolines, Selwyn over-reached himself: the Auckland Islands had been included within New Zealand’s boundaries only in April 1842 in letters patent which also gave 33rd degree south latitude as the colony’s northern limit.

Norfolk Island first entered into Selwyn’s plans for Melanesia late in 1853, apparently on Sir George Grey’s initiative and certainly with his fullest co-operation.67 Grey and Selwyn had sailed together from Auckland in the government brig *Victoria* early in November 1853. After leaving the Reverend William Nihill and his family on the island of Mare in the Loyalties, the *Victoria* sailed for the Isle of Pines which, together with New Caledonia, had recently been annexed by the French. A call

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63 On his return from the 1851 island voyage Selwyn had informed Grey on 25 October that the rigging of the *Border Maid* had been found ‘entirely decayed’. GL:NZ, S 16, AP; see also Tucker, II, 10.
64 Tucker, I, 351.
65 Journal of Lord Robert Cecil, 1852, pp.252, 271-3, photocopy, ATL.
66 Selwyn to Coleridge, 8 October 1851, quoted in Tucker, I, 375-6.
was then made at Norfolk Island, whence the Victoria returned to Auckland in mid-December. A fortnight later Grey and Selwyn sailed together by passenger ship for England.

Grey's attempt to persuade the British Government to oppose the French annexation on the grounds that the Isle of Pines and part of New Caledonia lay within New Zealand territory as defined in 'various Charters, Letters Patent and Commissions' was totally unsuccessful. Equally unsuccessful was a scheme for Norfolk Island proposed, he said, in conjunction with the Bishop of New Zealand. In a despatch to the Secretary of State, dated 31 December 1853, Grey said that when at Norfolk Island they had learned that the convict establishment 'was being broken up, and a general idea prevailed that the Government proposed to give up the island to the inhabitants of Pitcairn's Island.' He and the Bishop now proposed that Norfolk Island, as well as providing a 'habitation for the people of Pitcairn's Island', might also 'be made a nursery, from which Christianity and civilisation might be spread throughout those Islands in the Pacific which still remain in a state of idolatry and barbarism'. The plan, said Grey, was to adopt at Norfolk Island 'the system of Industrial Schools for the education of the Native Race, which is at present in existence in New Zealand.'

On arrival in England, Selwyn was elected as a member of the Pitcairn's Island Committee, a highly placed body of civil and ecclesiastical friends of the Pitcairn Islanders, to whom he outlined his scheme to set up the Melanesian school on Norfolk Island. And in a printed appeal for subscriptions to endow a Melanesian bishopric, organized by Edward Coleridge in 1854 at Selwyn's request, it was 'stated expressly that there was reason to hope that the Bishopric would be for the benefit of the Pitcairn Islanders as well as for that of the Natives of the other Islands of the Western Pacific.'

As it turned out, neither the Pitcairn Committee nor the Colonial Office would have anything to do with the Selwyn-Grey Norfolk Island scheme, but the appeal for funds to endow a Melanesian bishopric was an immediate success, a sum approaching £5000 being assured within a few weeks. This amount was subsequently doubled. Selwyn met with a very warm reception from friends in England, not least at Cambridge where he preached four missionary sermons during Advent. Also during

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68 Grey to Newcastle and enclosures, 15 December 1853, CO 209/118, pp.66-76; see also CO 209/126, pp.66-70.
69 Grey to Newcastle, 31 December 1853 and minutes thereon, CO 209/118, pp.390-394b.
70 Norfolk Island, pp.16, 18.
71 Selwyn to Labouchere, 26 November 1857, copy in Selwyn's hand in MS 273/3, AIM. Selwyn made no mention of Norfolk Island in his letter of 14 August 1854 to Coleridge proposing the raising of a fund for endowing a Melanesian bishopric, Tucker, II, 30. No copy of the printed appeal has been seen.
72 Coleridge to Selwyn, 11 September [1854], MS 273/13, AIM.
73 Selwyn stated in 1857 that £10,000 was 'already paid up', Norfolk Island, p.14.
his stay in England the first Southern Cross was built and launched and, probably most important of all for Melanesia, Patteson was recruited for the mission.

For a year after his return Selwyn was fully occupied with New Zealand affairs but in May 1856, Patteson accompanying him, he sailed for Norfolk Island where the arrival of the Pitcairners was daily expected. From Norfolk Island they went on to Sydney and a head-on collision between Selwyn and the Governor, Sir William Denison, within whose jurisdiction Norfolk Island lay. Despite his lack of success with both the Pitcairn Committee and the Colonial Office in England, Selwyn was as determined as ever to get a foothold on Norfolk Island for the Melanesian Mission, to establish a central school there under Patteson’s supervision and to staff it, on the domestic side and in some degree on the teaching side as well, with Pitcairn Islanders. He also envisaged the possibility of training ‘some of the young men of the Island to be missionaries to the Islands’.

Denison, however, was adamantly opposed to a Melanesian school on Norfolk Island and to the presence there of any clergyman other than the Pitcairners’ own Mr Nobbs, and nothing Selwyn did or said could alter this. Selwyn in fact had a very great deal to say on the subject of his alleged episcopal rights on Norfolk Island and the advantages he foresaw for all concerned, especially the Pitcairners, of having a Melanesian school established there. Over a period of eighteen months Denison, the Pitcairners, Selwyn’s friends in England, even the Secretary of State for the Colonies were all harangued by Selwyn on ‘the Law of the case’ as he saw it.

In Selwyn’s circle the Law and the Church were equally prominent. He was the son of a Q.C., brother of another, son-in-law of a judge. In England his closest friend, Edward Coleridge, was brother and brother-in-law of two other judges. In New Zealand one of Selwyn’s few intimates was William Martin, the Chief Justice. Although this close association with so many distinguished jurists was of inestimable benefit to Selwyn in the drawing up of the New Zealand Church Constitution, it also had its disadvantageous side, for it tempted him to suppose that he, too, was expert in the law, especially as regards Norfolk Island. In November 1857, over a period of less than a week, he wrote three lengthy

74 Undated fragment, J.C. Patteson letters, Micro MS 686/F.10, ATL.
75 Undated fragment, ibid, F.34.
76 Norfolk Island, pp.18, 20. Selwyn’s letter to Denison of 19 June 1856, ibid., pp.6-7, makes it clear that the direct involvement of Pitcairn Islanders in the Melanesian Mission had been part of his Norfolk Island plan at least from that date.
77 ‘Remarks of Sir W. Denison’, Norfolk Island, pp.13-23; Patteson, undated fragment, Micro MS 686/F.34, ATL. Two letters from C.J. Abraham, dated 12 November 1855 and 30 June 1856, published in the Guardian, blamed the Pitcairn Committee’s opposition to Selwyn (and, by implication, Denison’s also), on ‘party spirit and suspicion in religious matters’, and on ‘dread of what is called Tractarianism’; copies in Murray to Selwyn, 23 July 1857. See also Denison to Selwyn, 3 March 1857, MS 273/3, AIM.
letters, to the Reverend T. B. Murray, secretary of the Pitcairn Committee in London, to Herman Merivale, Permanent Under-Secretary at the Colonial Office and a personal friend, and to Henry Labouchere, Secretary of State for the Colonies, letters remarkable not only for their length but for their didacticism and assumption of legal expertise. Perhaps the most remarkable feature of all three letters was Selwyn's assertion, phrased slightly differently to each of his correspondents, that when his patent was still in draft he had drawn the attention of James Stephen to the word 'north' in the description of latitudes, 'and thereby afforded an opportunity of alteration of any thing which might be deemed a clerical Error', but that when 'the formal Instrument' was placed in his hands, 'with the same word still unaltered', he accepted it 'knowingly and willingly'.

The critical issue now for Selwyn was the subdivision of the diocese of New Zealand. Harper had already been consecrated Bishop of Christchurch, as a suffragan of Sydney. Before the Colonial Office would consent to the erection of further bishoprics, or to constituting a new diocese of New Zealand with metropolitan powers, Selwyn must resign his original patent. In consequence, this was his last chance to assert his 'claim' to Norfolk Island.

He attempted to do a deal with the Colonial Office: the Act which placed Norfolk Island under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Bishop of Tasmania should be repealed, he (Selwyn) would then resign his patent, and 'the present Diocese' could be divided into seven: Christchurch, Wellington, Nelson, Turanga, Tauranga, Auckland and 'The Islands'. He asked 'to be allowed to take charge of the Island Bishopric in conjunction with the See of Auckland for seven years', but on this point was willing to give way, if it should be thought that the 'Bishop of the Islands should have his See at some place affording the advantage of a harbour for the Mission Vessel', in which case he would propose the Bay of Islands. 'This Diocese', he said, 'would include of course Norfolk Island, and any other Islands to the Northward of New Zealand, which hereafter may form part of the British Empire.' So saying, Selwyn forwarded his resignation to his brother the Q.C., 'ready to be presented to the Archbishop as soon as the necessary preliminaries can be agreed upon.'

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78 Selwyn to Murray, 21 November 1857, copy in Selwyn's hand, MS 273/3, AIM.
79 Selwyn to Merivale, 24 November 1857, copy in Selwyn's hand, ibid.
80 Selwyn to Labouchere, 26 November 1857, copy in Selwyn's hand, ibid.
81 Sir William Martin was absent from New Zealand at this time, otherwise wiser counsels might have prevailed.
82 Selwyn to Labouchere, see n.80 above.
83 Discussions about the division of the diocese had been going on for some years, at least since 1848. See Selwyn to Gladstone, 31 October 1848, BM Add. MS 44299, Micro MS 426, ATL.
84 Selwyn to Labouchere, 26 November 1857.
It is not known how long Selwyn’s resignation remained in his brother’s hands before being forwarded to the Archbishop of Canterbury, but by July 1858 a copy had been received at the Colonial Office, and on 27 September 1858 letters patent were issued for new dioceses of Nelson, Wellington and Waiapu, for transferring the diocese of New Zealand with metropolitan powers to ‘consist of the Provinces of Auckland and New Plymouth’. Except in citations of the original New Zealand Charter of 16 November 1840 the old north latitude had gone for good, leaving Selwyn as far away as ever from gaining a foothold on Norfolk Island.

But with Patteson’s recruitment the possibility of an island bishopric had come appreciably closer. Prior to Patteson’s arrival, Selwyn’s involvement in the islands had been an intensely personal one. Writing on board the Undine in August 1849 at Aneityum in the New Hebrides, Selwyn confessed to Coleridge his sense of vocation for the life of an ocean-going missionary and added: ‘Few men are so entirely at their ease at sea, or so able to use every moment of time, perhaps more effectually because with less distraction than on shore.’ And as news reached him of convulsions in the Church in England, Selwyn’s missionary role in the islands became more and more a solace to him, a bulwark not only against the doubts and anxieties which were besetting so many of his friends in England but also against the difficulties facing him in New Zealand. He wrote in April 1851: ‘We are not without our share of the characteristic trial of the day, the attempt of the State to coerce conscience; but my little vessel rides quietly over the waves with New Caledonia and the dark Islands of the Pacific under my lee. I will never leave the Church of England, happen what may, but I may be forced to serve her and her Lord in some other portion of this field: a little more, and Lord Grey would have made me a Missionary Bishop with “my path upon the mountain wave, my home upon the deep.”’

During his visit to England in 1854 he toyed with the idea that, as the consecration of a successor as Bishop of New Zealand would present no insurmountable problems, the answer for the islands might be for him to resign New Zealand and, being already consecrated, simply to take Melanesia as his own diocese. But it took only one Melanesian voyage with his new missionary chaplain to persuade Selwyn that Patteson would be ‘the first Island Bishop’. The question was, how and when.

The New Zealand Church Constitution of June 1857 made provision for the General Synod to associate with itself ‘any Missionary Dioceses

85 CO 209/148, pp. 89-94b.
86 CO 380/124, p. 188b.
87 Selwyn to Coleridge, 12 August 1849, quoted in Tucker, I, 287.
88 Selwyn to Lady Powis, 15 April 1851, ibid., p. 354.
89 Selwyn to Coleridge, 14 August 1854, ibid., II, 30.
90 Selwyn to Sir John Patteson, 2 March 1857, ibid., p. 62.
which may be formed among the other Islands of the Pacific Ocean." In November 1857, as is evident from his letter to Labouchere, Selwyn was still proposing to retain the reins of Melanesia in his own hands, in conjunction with the diocese of New Zealand, for another seven years. In March 1859, when various trusts were set up by the first General Synod, he also announced his intention to withhold the land held in trust for the Melanesian Mission 'till the Island Bishop shall have been constituted and the Bishop shall have associated himself with the General Synod.' Yet less than a year later he wrote to the Secretary of State formally proposing Patteson's consecration.

There were doubtless a number of factors which decided Selwyn to speed up the Melanesian bishopric. One of these may have been the ready availability of Patteson money for the needs of the mission. But more important, surely, would have been the changing climate of opinion in England regarding missionary bishops. To understand this change it is necessary to leave New Zealand and the Pacific for a moment and look at Britain, and other places where the Church of England had taken root. In 1844 Bishop Wilberforce's *A History of the Protestant Episcopal Church in America* introduced the American concept of missionary bishops to a much wider audience than Doane's sermon would ever have reached. But the English Church was not yet ready to follow the precedent set by the Episcopal Church in America and a Bill introduced into the House of Lords to legalize missionary bishops came to nothing. One difficulty which it had been hoped the Bill would meet, that of providing episcopal supervision of missionaries in Borneo, was solved by consecrating a bishop for a small British-held island off the coast, a solution which Selwyn regarded as setting a useful precedent for his Norfolk Island scheme.

In the later 1850s, the concept of missionary bishops again came to the fore. Bishop Gray of Cape Town had been contemplating the consecration of a bishop to minister in neighbouring Boer territory and in 1856 obtained the opinion of the Law Officers of the Crown, Sir Frederic Thesiger and Dr Robert Phillimore, that no obstacle existed 'to the Exercise on any Territory without the Dominion of Her Majesty of the Spiritual functions inherent in the office of a Bishop'. He was advised, however, that the act of consecration should take place 'beyond the limits of British Territory'. Arriving in England in 1858 to further his

91 Tucker, II, 102-3.
92 Selwyn's address to General Synod, quoted in ibid., p.121.
93 CO 209/153, p.27b.
96 'Case for the joint consideration and opinion of Sir Frederic Thesiger and Dr. R. Phillimore', copy in MS 273/2, AIM.
plans, Gray found a movement already afoot to send a mission to the Zambesi. This was the Universities’ Mission to Central Africa which had been inspired by Livingstone’s lectures at Oxford and Cambridge in late 1857 and which had since attracted widespread support and enthusiasm.

Gray announced his support of the Zambesi project and in November 1859 Archdeacon Charles Mackenzie was invited to head the mission. Whether or not he could go as bishop had yet to be decided, and the whole question of missionary bishops was referred to the recently revived Convocation of Canterbury. First its Lower House deliberated, and the report, sent to the Upper House in June 1860, led to a resolution expressing the hope that the Bishop of Cape Town ‘and his Comprovincials may be able to see fit to admit the head of the mission into the Episcopal order before he be sent forth to the heathen.’ There seems to have been no thought of using the 1841 Act and consecrating Mackenzie in England under licence.

Without doubt Selwyn’s friends in England kept him informed of these developments, but the point to be noted is that Selwyn, in New Zealand, was moving towards the consecration of a missionary bishop quite independently of the deliberations of the Convocation. On 20 January 1860, several days before the Lower House brought down its report on missionary bishops and months before any word of its contents could reach New Zealand, Selwyn wrote to the Duke of Newcastle, Secretary of State for the Colonies, asking in what manner H.M. Government could sanction the consecration of Patteson as a missionary bishop for the Melanesian islands. He suggested four alternatives: (1) he could give up part of his own diocese, from the Bay of Islands northward, as the see of the Island bishop; (2) the Act annexing Norfolk Island to one of the Australian dioceses could be amended, thus allowing Norfolk Island to become the see of the new bishop; (3) a diocese avowedly beyond British jurisdiction could be created by a ‘kind of patent for the bishop, analogous to the authority of a British consul’; (4) the New Zealand bishops could ‘exercise the inherent powers of their office, as the bishops of a distinct province of the Church’.

In Whitehall Selwyn’s resurrection of the Norfolk Island scheme was ‘tacitly passed by’. For the rest, the Colonial Office was guided by

98 ibid., p.203. The reports of the Upper and Lower Houses of Convocation are printed in full on pp.198-202.
99 Selwyn’s letter to Newcastle and Browne’s covering despatch are both missing from the Colonial Office files, but some minutes relating to the subject are there. CO 209/153, pp.13-22b. The duplicate of Browne’s despatch is in G 25/8, NA. The contents of Selwyn’s letter are deduced from Colonial Office minutes, from Selwyn’s letter to his brother William, 4 March 1861, quoted in Tucker, II, 212-3, and from Newcastle’s reply, 26 June 1860, G 1/51, NA. The latter was subsequently printed in Records and Documents relating to the Consecration of a Missionary Bishop, Auckland, 1861, pp.3-4.
100 See minutes by Gairdner and others, CO 209/153, p.22.
Newcastle’s opinion that ‘H.M.’s Govt. shd. in no way impede, but should stand as much as possible clear of responsibility for the proceedings of Mr. Pattison [sic] and the Bps. of N. Zealand in the Melanesian Islands.”

The question was, to what extent did the law allow the government to remain aloof? The Law Officers of the Crown now agreed that colonial bishops generally were not acting illegally in exercising their spiritual functions, including that of consecration, when beyond the limits of British territory. They even conceded that Mackenzie could be consecrated in Cape Town because ‘British law, as such, does not prevail in the Cape Colony.’ Governor Browne in New Zealand, however, was advised that ‘the Bishops of New Zealand are at liberty without invasion of the Royal Prerogative or infringement of the Law of England, to exercise what Bishop Selwyn describes as their inherent power of consecrating Mr Pattison [sic] or any other person to take Episcopal charge of the Melanesian Islands, provided that the consecration should take place beyond British Territory’.

A copy of the Law Officers’ opinion of July 1856 seems also to have been forwarded by the Duke of Newcastle to Governor Browne, and by the Governor to Bishop Selwyn. But Selwyn quickly got round the embargo on consecration within British territory by submitting the matter to two Chief Justices, past and present (Martin and Arney), and to two Attorneys General, past and present (Swainson and Whitaker). None could see anything which would render the act of consecration in New Zealand illegal, and Patteson was therefore consecrated in Auckland on 24 February 1861. A copy of the record of consecration was duly sent, without comment, to the Colonial Office. There one official minuted the file: ‘I observe that Mr Pattison [sic] is consecrated in spite of the admonition in the desp. of 27 June/60 in New Zealand.’ To which another official added: ‘Better to take no notice in existing circumstances.’

But although Selwyn scored this little victory over the Colonial Office, it had been a close go with one of his own suffragans. Bishop Hobhouse of Nelson was clearly very uneasy about Selwyn’s plans to consecrate Patteson and had sent off to Phillimore a catalogue of anxious queries about procedures and protocol. Patteson remarked at the time: ‘Bp. [of] Nelson raises some questions about my Consecration—he is vacillating as about his own coming to NZ—a fear to cooperate in a step

102 Newcastle to Browne, 26 June 1860, G 1/51, NA.
103 Copy in MS 273/2, AIM. See minute by Rogers, 9 June 1860, CO 209/153, p.20.
104 Selwyn to W. Selwyn, 4 March 1861, quoted in Tucker, II, 213; also Whitaker to Selwyn, 26 November 1860, in Records and Documents, p.5.
105 CO 209/160, p.440b.
106 Hobhouse to Phillimore, 20 November 1860, in Archives of the Church of the Province of New Zealand, 1/9, NA.
which has no precedent etc'. But long before Hobhouse could receive an answer from Phillimore he had been prevailed upon to join Selwyn and Abraham, first in electing Patteson, then in consecrating him, and finally in installing him as ‘missionary Bishop for the Western Islands of the South Pacific Ocean.’

Patteson was not consecrated Bishop of Melanesia. He had no defined diocese. For six years his seat was at Kohimarama (today’s Mission Bay), within the diocese of another bishop to whom, at his installation, he had taken ‘an oath of obedience . . . personally not qua Metropolitan’. Without a diocese he could not follow the usual Anglican practice of assuming as his own the name of his see and for the rest of his life continued to sign himself with his own surname, as also did his successor, John Richardson Selwyn.

In Auckland the choice of 24 February, St Matthias’ Day, had seemed so peculiarly appropriate for the consecration of a missionary bishop that it was hoped the same day would have been chosen in Cape Town, but in fact Mackenzie’s consecration had taken place almost two months previously, on New Year’s Day 1861. To compare the very different careers of these two men as missionary bishops would be to stray beyond the scope of this essay. It should be mentioned, however, that in contrast to all the long drawn out deliberations which preceded the consecration in the colonies, without licence, of Mackenzie and Patteson, three other missionary bishops were shortly afterwards consecrated in England, under licence, for territories outside the Queen’s dominions. The procedure followed in each of these consecrations was that laid down in the Act of October 1841, for although the Jerusalem bishopric was in disfavour, especially among High Churchmen, the Act itself remained in force. There would have been no legal or theological impediment to its being resorted to for the consecration of Mackenzie in England. The reason why this was not considered possibly lies in the fervour, indeed euphoria, in which the whole Zambesi enterprise was conceived, coupled with the fact that Convocation was also involved, at a time when that body had only recently succeeded in freeing itself from a century and a half of royal suppression. In Patteson’s case, the reason why the 1841

107 Patteson to Sir John Patteson, 4 December 1860, Micro MS 686/L.59, ATL.
108 A memorandum by Phillimore, dated 20 February 1861, ‘respecting the Consecration of Bishops, without the dominions and jurisdiction of the Crown’ in MS 273/2 (AIM) may have been written in response to Hobhouse’s letter.
109 The records of election and consecration are printed in Records and Documents, pp.6-8. Caroline Abraham’s account of the installation is quoted in Charlotte Mary Yonge, Life of John Coleridge Patteson, London, 1894 ed., I, 324.
110 Patteson to Sir John Patteson, 4 March 1861, Micro MS 686/L.65, ATL.
111 Selwyn to W. Selwyn, 4 March 1861, quoted in Tucker, II, 212.
112 Thomas Nettleship Staley in December 1861 for ‘the new missionary diocese of Hawaii’; William George Tozer, Mackenzie’s successor in the Central Africa mission, in February 1863; and Samuel Ajayi Crowther in June 1864 for the Niger district in West Africa.
Act was not seen as a precedent may have been due to Selwyn’s unwillingness to revive memories of the Jerusalem bishopric controversy and his involvement in Alexander’s consecration. Selwyn’s vision of a missionary bishop for the ‘dark islands’ of Melanesia was always very much one of personal commitment. Central to the whole concept was ‘the missionary college’, first at St John’s and, when that failed, at Norfolk Island. But Selwyn’s Norfolk Island scheme never got off the ground, and the more single-mindedly he pursued that goal the more obdurately closed to him Norfolk Island remained. Ironically, when the way was opened to Patteson to move the Melanesian Mission to Norfolk Island in the later 1860s Selwyn tried to persuade him not to go.113

Shortly after Patteson’s death in 1871 R. H. Codrington wrote: ‘I think that in Bp. Selwyn’s lifetime and under his influence he will get too much credit really due to Bp. Patteson. Bp. Selwyn devised the plan of the Mission but no one who has worked in it since I have known it—except Bp. Patteson—would have worked under him; and no one thinks he could have made it work.’114 In the sense that the inspiration was his, Selwyn was indeed the founder of the Anglican Church in Melanesia. But as an effective entity the Melanesian Mission was Patteson’s creation: initially as missionary chaplain, working under the umbrella of Selwyn’s prestige and latterly as bishop, when Selwyn’s pressure to involve himself in New Zealand could seriously have undermined the Melanesian work.114

No one would deny Selwyn’s breadth of vision or his largeness of heart and mind, but he drove everyone, including himself, too hard and there was in consequence an ever growing gap between plans and achievements. In its earliest years, and under his direct supervision, the Melanesian Mission achieved very little and the New Zealand Church suffered from his long absences in the islands. But his was the sort of single-mindedness which would brook neither opposition nor correction, however well-intentioned. Once the Norfolk Island plan had been formulated he was determined, come what may, to put it into effect. Herman Merivale, James Stephen’s successor at the Colonial Office, tried to jolly Selwyn out of his episcopal claim to Norfolk Island. ‘I must tell you’, he wrote in a personal letter, ‘that you are not Bishop of Norfolk Island, any more than I am of Melipotamus, nor, in my firm belief as a lawyer ever were.’ In real affection, but also in some exasperation, Merivale told Selwyn: ‘You have earned for yourself such a name

113 ‘The Primate does not like the idea of our leaving NZ.’ Patteson to sister, undated fragment, Micro MS 686/F.40, ATL. See also Patteson papers, Selwyn College, Cambridge, Micro 192, Auckland University Library.
114 Codrington to aunt, 1 October 1872, quoted Hilliard, pp.136-7.
115 For example, Patteson to sisters, 28 November 1861: ‘I think I must protest agst. the practical charge of a parish in addition to Melanesian work’; and 6 February 1864: ‘The Primate wanted me to let my clergy leave St Andrews in the summer to go about NZ, & I refused’. Micro MS 686/L.96 and L.109, ATL.
and influence, that there are a certain number of people who would go to the stake for it that black is white, round square, or north south, if you were pleased to affirm either of these propositions.' But, continued Merivale, 'with the mass of thinking folks who are outside the sphere of such enchantment', Selwyn was in fact weakening his position by resting on 'so trumpery a ground as a clerical error'.

No one took less notice than Selwyn himself of the 'geographical definition of boundaries' in his patent: he sailed and landed where he chose, regardless of latitude and longitude. But just as his manner in those early arguments with the Colonial Office had created suspicion and opposition, so too did his attempt in later years to use the north latitude in his patent as a 'legal' basis for the Norfolk Island scheme. It seems to have been Herman Merivale's jocular attempt to get him to abandon his stand which goaded Selwyn into that desperate folly of claiming to Merivale himself, to Murray of the Pitcairn Committee, and to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, that the north latitude in the draft patent had been pointed out to James Stephen and that therefore its appearance in the 'formal Instrument' was not an error.

Whatever the reaction of his three correspondents to this astounding claim, no hint of it seems to have reached Selwyn. Mr Murray remarked that the Bishop's views on 'the Ecclesiastical Status of Norfolk Island' were a subject 'scarcely suited for the consideration of the Pitcairn Fund Committee.' Herman Merivale's reply was urbane, detached, with no mention either of James Stephen or of Selwyn's claim regarding him. The Secretary of State appears to have taken no official notice of Selwyn's letter. It was received in the Colonial Office on 8 February 1858, it was given a registration number, but the letter itself is not to be found. Was it sent off to Sir James Stephen, then ten years retired from the Colonial Office, for his comments? Or was it simply 'mislaid', as the wisest course to be taken with so ill-advised a communication? Whatever the explanation, the fact he had ever made such a claim would now be unknown had not Selwyn himself kept fair copies of all three letters.

That Selwyn had in fact pointed out the north latitude to James Stephen is, in view of all the circumstances, completely unbelievable. In 1857, however, he had come to believe he had done so and, as

116 Merivale to Selwyn, 12 June 1857, MS 273/10, AIM.
117 Murray to Selwyn, 13 March 1858, MS 273/3, AIM.
118 Merivale to Selwyn, 15 March 1858, MS 60/107, AIM.
119 CO 361/4, p.131.
120 Cf. reaction in the Colonial Office to Hobson's despatch of 26 May 1840 pointing out the north latitude in the New Zealand Charter: CO 209/9, pp.102-8.
121 Caroline Palmer wrote on 14 October 1841 in connection with the appointment of archdeacons (Selwyn himself being her informant), that the 'Geographical Clerks' had that day accepted certain basic facts about the relationship of the North, South and Stewart Islands to each other which Selwyn 'had in vain attempted to make plain to the comprehension of the Secretaries themselves'. On 24 November 1857 Selwyn wrote to Merivale: 'The question whether 34° North Lat. was a clerical error or not was brought by me before Sir
Merivale said of his admirers, would doubtless have gone to the stake for it that black was white, round square and north south. But in later life Selwyn apparently favoured the more romantic version that he had ‘lodged no protest at all’ but had accepted ‘in real earnest, the enormous jurisdiction thus inadvertently committed to him’. By some peculiar quirk of character, he seems to have preferred people to forget, perhaps, even, had forgotten himself, that the real origin of the Melanesian Mission had been his desire to fulfil the role of a missionary bishop, ‘going before, to organize the Church, not waiting till the Church had partially been organized—a leader, not a follower’.

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Jas. Stephen while my Pat. was still in draft: the ansr. which I received was: that it was entirely in the department of the Geog. Clerks.’ (MS 272/3, AIM.) Had the passage of time blurred not only the respective roles of secretaries and geographical clerks but also the actual subject under discussion?

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