An Evangelical Episcopate
6/15 Purpose and Nature of Episcopal Leadership

(A Report of the Sydney Diocesan Doctrine Commission.)

Reference

1.   Synod Resolution 6/15: Purpose and Nature of Episcopal Leadership:

Synod requests the Diocesan Doctrine Commission to prepare a report for the 1st Session of the 51st Synod on the purpose and nature of episcopal leadership, giving particular attention to the nature of episcopal and archiepiscopal ministry in a diocese such as ours where there are assistant bishops, and provide both a biblical and theological rationale as well as a practical description of the roles, responsibilities and priorities of bishops and archbishops.

Introduction

2.   It is clear that leadership and pastoral care were exercised by recognised and authorised individuals within Christian congregations in the time of the New Testament, and a pastoral office in its various guises has been a feature of Christian ecclesial life ever since. In the undivided church of the first ten centuries, and in Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican and Lutheran streams in later centuries, the office of 'bishop' or 'overseer' has been particularly significant. From 1836 there has been a bishop (from 1897 styled Archbishop) leading Anglican Christians in Sydney. However, the second decade of the twenty-first century in Australia brings its own unique challenges. The Diocese of Sydney is presently served by an archbishop and five assistant bishops who operate in a context in which the diocesan synod and its standing committee have a role in the government of the Diocese and its churches, and where there are complex yet real relationships with those outside the Diocese including the Province of New South Wales, the Anglican Church of Australia, the Anglican Communion, and entities such as GAFCON and the Global South. The wider context is even more complex given the size of the city of Sydney and its environs, and an overtly post-Christian stance on the part of the city's legislators, judiciary, print and electronic media.

3.   The approach of this report is to examine the biblical concept of 'oversight', to reflect upon the Anglican formularies, and in particular the Ordinal, to see how the biblical material was applied to the changed circumstances of the churches at the time of the Reformation, to sketch the development of the episcopal role in Sydney from the time of Bishop Broughton to the present day, and finally to deduce principles that might provide the biblical and theological rationale asked for by the synod reference.

Biblical Roots

4.   The Greek nouns which we translate as 'bishop' or 'overseer' and the verbs we translate 'oversee' (*episkopos*, *episkopē*, *episkopeō*, *episkeptomai*, etc.) are found not only in the New Testament, but in both the Greek version of the Old Testament in use in Jesus' day (the LXX), and the wider Greek literature of the time.[1] In neither of these latter sources is it a technical term, nor is it specifically religious. For example, it could be used of state officials protecting the interests of Athens in the Attic league, or of builders erecting a public building. It could also be used of the benevolent care and patronage of the gods (Homer, *Iliad*, 22, 254f.).

5.   In the LXX the word group's range of meaning includes 'to take interest in', 'to care for', 'to visit', 'to inspect', 'to investigate'. It mostly translates the Hebrew word-group *pqd*, whose range of meaning is similar. Which of these meanings is on view in any given case depends to a great extent on the identity and role of the overseer, whether it be God, a king, an ordinary citizen, etc.

6.   The foundational use of the word group in the LXX is in relation to **God**. God is the quintessential 'overseer': the one who cares for his people (Zech 10:3), his land (Deut 11:11–12) and humanity in general (Ps 8:5); who sees and helps those in need (Gen 21:1; 50:24; Ru 1:6); and who, most commonly, visits judgment upon the wicked (Ex 32:34; Jer 10:15; Ps 59:5). God's anointed **king** was to shepherd the people on behalf of Yahweh, Israel's Shepherd. This involved healing the injured, feeding the healthy, bringing back the strays; and it also involved caring for the perishing (*episkepsomai*, see Ezek 34:4; Zech 11:16). Eleazar the **priest** was to exercise oversight of the oil, incense, grain offerings and furnishings of the tabernacle (*episkopē*, Num 4:16). Unit **commanders** designated as overseers of the army gave orders to the troops (*episkopos*, 2 Kings 11:15). The royal secretary gave money to **workmen** with oversight of the temple, who paid it out to the builders (*episkopos*, 2 Kings 12:11).

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[1]   Throughout this section of the report the English translation 'overseer' will be used in an effort to avoid importing contemporary associations of the word 'bishop' into the discussion.

7.   In these various contexts it might be one person who is the 'overseer' or there might be many 'overseers'. An 'overseer' was responsible to pay careful attention to their sphere of responsibility—whether that be a building, an army, the kingdom, or the whole of creation—in order to ensure that it was ordered properly, and to take appropriate action if it was not. The careful attention involved in oversight was not passive, but involved active investigation and the taking of action to ensure that what had to be done was done.

8.   It is against this general backdrop that the New Testament makes use of the language of 'oversight' and 'visitation'. Perhaps unsurprisingly, there is an overarching divine reference which frames the application of the terms to Christians themselves. The New Testament echoes the Old Testament language of God visiting [*epeskepsato*] his people and bringing deliverance (Lk 1:68). James the elder even told the assembly of apostles and elders in Jerusalem that God had visited [*epeskepsato*] the Gentiles 'to take from them a people for his name' (Acts 15:14).

9.   The most important development in the New Testament is that Christ is spoken of as 'the Shepherd and Overseer [*episkopon*] of your souls' (1 Pet 2:25). This is the only time the word is used with reference to Christ, yet the association with the idea of shepherd here (again echoing the Old Testament connection of the concepts) enables us to see references to Christ as 'the good shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep' (Jn 10:11) and as 'the chief shepherd' who is coming again (1 Pet 5:4), as relevant to this theme. This overseer and shepherd watches over his flock, guards it against predators, nurtures and cares for it, and directs it for its benefit. The extent of his care and provision is shown by his self-sacrifice for their salvation. As he arrives in Jerusalem at the climactic moment, Luke records that Jesus wept over the city and the judgment that will befall it 'because you did not know the time of your visitation [*ton kairon tē episkopē sou*]' (Lk 19:44). It is highly significant that in this context it is the coming of the Christ to Jerusalem that represents God's visitation.

10.   There is a general usage of the terms when applied to human beings. Disciples are expected to visit [*episkeptesthai*] those in distress (Matt 25:36, 43; Jas 1:27). In this sense 'visitation' is a responsibility of the entire congregation. Watching over and providing care and support for the vulnerable among God's people is not limited to a particular group of people. However, in the light of the decision of Paul and Barnabas to 'return and visit [*episkepsōmetha*] the brothers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord' (Acts 15:36), this could also be something more specific, arising not just from their membership of the congregation at Antioch, but from the role they exercised in evangelising and planting churches throughout the eastern Mediterranean.

11.   The idea of an office of 'overseer' emerges rather early in the New Testament. What is more, the evidence is compelling that this office is identical to that of the 'elder' (Lightfoot, *Ministry,* 36–37). So the letter of Paul to the Philippians is addressed 'to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers [*episkopoi*] and deacons' (Phil 1:1). The plural form is significant, indicating that there were a number of overseers in the Philippian congregation. Titus 1 begins by addressing the appointment of elders (v. 5) but moves to a discussion of the qualities of the overseer. Paul gathers 'the elders [*presbuterous*] of the church in Ephesus' in Acts 20:17 — again plural — but when they arrive reminds them that they must pay careful attention to themselves and to all the flock 'in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers [*episkopous*], to shepherd the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood' (Acts 20:28). The elders are overseers and there is no sense of Paul turning his attention from the elders he has gathered to a subset of this group. Paul explicitly connects oversight and pastoral care as he addresses those he has gathered, with the intensity of the care envisaged indicated by reference to the cost at which the church was purchased by God: 'with his own blood'.

12.   The Pastoral Epistles and 1 Peter contain the most direct teaching on the office of overseer, indicating not only the qualifications for appointment but in some measure how the office is to be exercised. The lists of qualities in 1 Timothy for overseers and in Titus for elders and overseers are almost identical.

1 Timothy 3:2–7 (overseers)	Titus 1:5–6 (elders)	Titus 1:7–9 (overseers)
above reproach	above reproach	above reproach
husband of one wife	husband of one wife	not arrogant
sober-minded	children are believers	not quick-tempered
self-controlled	children not involved in debauchery	not a drunkard
respectable	children not insubordinate	not violent
hospitable		not greedy for gain
able to teach		hospitable

1 Timothy 3:2–7 (overseers)	Titus 1:5–6 (elders)	Titus 1:7–9 (overseers)
not a drunkard		a lover of good
not violent		self-controlled
gentle		upright
not quarrelsome		holy
not a lover of money		disciplined
manage own household well with dignity		holding firmly to the trustworthy word
keeping his children submissive		able to give instruction in sound doctrine
not a recent convert		able to rebuke those who contradict it
well thought-of by outsiders		

In Titus, the transition from the brief list of qualities for 'elders' to that which at first glance seems to be headed 'overseers' involves both the conjunction 'for' [*gar*] in verse 7 and a move from plural to singular. The initial use of the plural 'elders' [*presbuterous*] is explained by reference to there being 'elders in each city' [*kata polin*]. The 'for' introduces a reason or basis for what has just been said. I. H. Marshall explains.

> The writer begins by affirming the need for elders to be blameless, and he then details the two areas of marriage and family life in which this must be true. Then he proceeds to explain *why* it is necessary. In his capacity as an overseer the candidate must be blameless inasmuch as he is acting on behalf of God in his household … In fact, the logic of the connection demands the identity of the two offices. (*The Pastoral Epistles,* 149, 160)

What is abundantly clear is that a particular stress is placed on being beyond reproach (and by extension being well thought of by outsiders), on faithful domestic behaviour (husband of one wife, children who commend his leadership in the home), and on an ability to teach (both positively in terms of instruction in the truth and negatively in terms of recognising and rebuking error). There are also common warnings about drunkenness, violence, greed and quarrelsomeness. There is an exemplary dimension to oversight: providing an example which encourages the faithful discipleship of others. Almost all the qualifications listed are qualities of character, though managing their own household well and an ability to teach in accordance with 'the trustworthy word as taught' are skills or abilities.

13.   What are we to make of the fact that Titus is charged to appoint [*katastēsē*] elders in each city (Tit 1:5)? At first glance this does look like a responsibility of oversight exercised beyond the congregation in which he, Titus, was an elder. However, the context indicates that the task given to Titus is to be done on behalf of Paul. That is, Titus is completing something that Paul had begun but had not finished when he had to leave Crete. Titus, then, is acting at Paul's direction; Paul does not appoint him to an office of supra-congregational oversight (cf. Acts 14:23).

14.   Peter highlights the example of Christ for the exercise of leadership among God's people (1 Pet 5:1–4). In addressing elders, Peter connects the images of shepherding and oversight in a particular way. 'Shepherding [*poimanate*] the flock of God' and 'exercising oversight' [*episkopountē*] are not two distinct activities but rather exercising oversight fills out what it means to shepherd. Of particular importance for Peter is the way this oversight is exercised: 'not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock' (vv. 2–3). The example of Christ, who gave himself willingly, did not seek his own advantage, and provided a model of service in contrast to the coercive leadership experienced in the world, is meant to shape the exercise of oversight among God's flock. This is because it is Christ himself who is 'the Chief Shepherd' [*archipoimenos*] (v. 4).

15.   Seven summary observations arise from the biblical teaching about 'oversight' among the people of God.

    a.   The apostles and prophets are never called 'overseers' in the New Testament, though Peter does self-identify as a 'fellow elder' when exhorting the elders to whom he writes (1 Pet 5:1). The supra-congregational, itinerant ministry of the apostles and prophets is not automatically transferable to those appointed as 'overseers'. An overseer, like any other elder, is an overseer *in a congregation*.

b.   There appears to be no biblical warrant for a distinction between a ministry of 'oversight' and a ministry of 'eldership'. This is seen particularly in Acts, in the qualification lists in the Pastoral Epistles, and in 1 Peter, where these appear to be different words for the same office, reflecting a fairly fluid situation in the early church.

c.   It would seem that in many places there was a plurality of overseers or elders within a given Christian congregation. This was most certainly the case in Philippi (Phil 1:1) and in Ephesus where Paul could speak of the 'council of elders' (1 Tim 4:14).

d.   We ought not to overlook the fact that Paul spoke to the Ephesian elders of how 'the Holy Spirit has made you overseers' (Acts 20:28). Like all the other gifts given by the ascended Christ (Eph 4:11), the ministry of oversight is recognised as a gift of the Spirit to the churches.

e.   In both the description of the work of the elders/overseers in Ephesus in Acts 20, and in the qualification lists in Timothy and Titus, the ministry of the word of God is prominent. The overseer is to be 'able to teach', to 'hold firm to the trustworthy word', to 'give instruction in sound doctrine', and to 'rebuke those who contradict it'.

f.   The qualification lists in the Pastoral Epistles all emphasise godly character. Elders/overseers are to be 'above reproach'. In their personal and public life they are to model godliness in a way which provides an example to other Christians and commends them to outsiders.

g.   The association of 'overseer' and 'shepherd' in 1 Peter 5 points to the importance of imitating Christ's self-sacrificial care of the flock (Acts 20:28). The overseer seeks the welfare of the church and its members, providing what otherwise might be labelled 'pastoral care'. The overseer is a pastor as well as a teacher who guards the church from the danger of false-teaching. Teaching the truth and driving away error are critical ways of providing this pastoral care, but so too is gentle compassion and self-sacrificial service.

h.   The overseer is accountable first and foremost to Christ, the 'chief Shepherd' (1 Pet 5:4).

In contrast to the Old Testament offices, all of which speak to us of the Christ to come, the first Christians borrowed everyday titles from the surrounding culture which best described the sorts of functions the church needs its leaders to perform. It is the function, not the office, that makes an overseer what he is. For this reason, there is no impediment to giving the name to a supra-congregational office with the same functions.

The Pre-Reformation Catholic Episcopate

16.   The biblical ministry of oversight in the congregation was quickly transformed into a distinct office of 'bishop' in the generation after the death of the apostles, sometimes in ways that do not sit comfortably with what we have seen in the New Testament. So Clement of Rome (*ca.* 35–99), at the end of the first century, spoke of how the apostles had appointed 'bishops and deacons', instructing that 'if these should fall asleep, other accredited persons should succeed them in their office' (*1 Clement,* 42, 44). Clement's particular concern was to challenge those in the congregation at Corinth who were rebelling against their bishop, urging his readers to 'make submission to the clergy' (*1 Clement,* 54, 57). Clement himself, acting as bishop in Rome, was intervening in a quarrel going on in a congregation in Corinth, something which in itself raises questions about how quickly a supra-congregational responsibility was being attached to the role. Clement's final admonition shows how seriously he took this responsibility: 'But if there are any who refuse to heed the declarations [Christ] has made through our lips, let them not doubt the gravity of the guilt and the peril in which they involve themselves' (*1 Clement,* 59).

17.   Ignatius of Antioch (35–108) filled out this development of the office in terms of what some have seen as an embryonic 'threefold order' of ministry: 'Let the bishop preside in the place of God, and his clergy in the place of the Apostolic conclave, and let my special friends the deacons be entrusted with the service of Jesus Christ …' (*To the Magnetians,* 6). Bishops, clergy, and deacons are distinguished and a pattern is already emerging of only one bishop in a city. 'Be as submissive to the bishop and to one another as Jesus Christ was to his Father', he wrote, and finished his letter with a reference to 'Polycarp, the Smyrnaean bishop' (*To the Magnetians,* 13, 15). In his letter to the Smyrnaeans, he famously wrote:

> Where the bishop is to be seen, there let all his people be; just as wherever Jesus Christ is present, we have the world-wide Church. Nor is it permissible to conduct baptisms or love-feasts without the bishop. On the other hand, whatever does have his sanction can be sure of God's approval too. This is the way to make certain of the soundness and validity of anything you do. (*To the Smyrnaeans,* 8)

18.   Irenaeus of Lyon (130–202) saw bishops as guardians of the faith and so successors of the apostles.

> True knowledge is the doctrine of the apostles, and the ancient constitution of the Church throughout all the world, and the distinctive manifestation of the body of Christ according to the successions of the bishops [*successiones episcoporum*], by which they have handed down that Church which exists in every place, and has come even unto us, being guarded and preserved, without any forging of

Scriptures, by a very complete system of doctrine, and neither receiving addition nor suffering curtailment … (*Against Heresies,* 4.33.8)

Bishops have a critical role in the Church according to Irenaeus. However, the evidence suggests that even as late as Irenaeus there was no clear and consistent distinction between the terms 'presbyter/elder' and 'overseer/bishop'. Irenaeus could speak of both 'bishops' and 'presbyters' as those who stand in the succession of the apostles (compare *Against Heresies* 3.3.1,2 and 4.26.2). In an intriguing sentence he even uses the terms interchangeably.

Such elders [*presbuterous*] does the Church nourish, of whom also the prophet says: 'I will give your rulers in peace and your bishops [*episkopous*] in righteousness … (*Against Heresies,* 4.26.5)

19.   It is Cyprian of Carthage (200–258), though*,* who most demonstrates the directions in which the episcopate had developed and which would lead eventually to papal primacy. 'Our Lord' he writes, 'whose precepts and admonitions we ought to observe, describing the honour of a bishop and the order of his Church, speaks in the Gospel, and says to Peter, "I say unto you, that you are Peter …"' A hierarchical view of the church is clear in the lines that follow in that letter.

Thence, through the changes of times and successions, the ordering of bishops [*episcoporum ordinatio*] and the order of the Church is handed down; so that the Church is constituted by the bishops [*Ecclesia super episcopos constituatur*], and every act of the Church is directed by these same presiding officers. Since this has been established by divine law, I am astonished that certain persons have been rash and bold enough to choose to write to me in such a manner as to send their letter in the Church's name, when the Church consists of the bishop, the clergy, and all the faithful [*ecclesia in episcopo et clero et in omnibus stantibus sit constituta*] … (Cyprian, *Epistle* 33.1)

20.   So within just two hundred years, the exercise of oversight by a plurality of elders had developed into a distinct and principal office in an ecclesiastical hierarchy: bishop, clergy, people. This shift in practice may well have begun for sociological reasons, as 'a wise and effective way of ruling and shepherding the flock of God but with no doctrinal or theological significance' (Burkill), but very early on it was fleshed out in theological terms. Cyprian went so far as to insist that bishops constitute the church: they were no longer a wise and appropriate ordering of ministry for the welfare or well-being (*bene* esse) of the church; rather they were seen by Cyprian as necessary and critical for the very being (*esse*) of the church. Authority and dignity continued to accrue to the office, along with distinctive clerical dress. Following the Edict of Milan (313), which brought the recognition of Christianity within the Roman Empire, bishops became civic figures as well. The case of Leo I, the bishop of Rome who in 452 persuaded Atilla the Hun to turn back from his invasion of Italy, and who did all he could to cement the role of Rome as the chief patriarch (Pope) of the Western church, is illustrative of this fact. The trajectory towards the idea of a 'prince-bishop' was set very early in Christian history.

21.   In succeeding centuries as the institutional structure of Roman Catholicism developed and a new political order in Europe emerged, the role of bishops continued to change. Bishops played a dual role as ecclesiastical leaders and as civic leaders. As one recent study paints the picture,

Every bishop was a successor of the Apostles and a prince of the Church, possessing both sacramental and jurisdictional powers, and with a solemn responsibility for the salvation of Christian souls. Moreover, most bishops were also princes of this world, whose duties demanded the combined talents of a politician, an administrator, and even sometimes … a soldier. Many bishops bore the rank and title of prince or baron, and their bishoprics held vast lands and far-reaching powers of secular jurisdiction … Belonging simultaneously to two governmental hierarchies, the bishop derived a portion of his jurisdictional and administrative powers from his monarch, although a portion of his powers was inherent within his ecclesiastical office. (Benson, pp. 3, 4).

22.   By the eve of the Reformation in many places throughout Europe bishops were not only powerful in legal, political and sometimes even military terms, many were corrupt. Given the wealth, prestige and power associated with a bishopric, these were often bought from the papacy, which approved any episcopal appointment. A notorious example was Albrecht, Archbishop of Mainz in the early sixteenth century, who sanctioned the sale of papal indulgences in his diocese as a way of raising the money to pay his bankers, to whom he was in debt as the result of loan he had acquired in order to pay the Pope to allow him to procure this archbishopric when he was already a bishop elsewhere.

The Understanding of the Episcopate in the reformed Church of England

23.   At the time of the Reformation it was clear that the government of the church needed to be reformed but there was disagreement about what this meant for the office of bishop. In the Lutheran branch of the Reformation, the office was retained; in Geneva and Switzerland it was not, and governance of the churches was placed in the hands of a Company of Pastors and the Consistory. In England, where a key element of reform was to abolish only what needed to be abolished while retaining what could be retained

without compromise to the Christian gospel, the episcopate was preserved, since, according to the preface to the new Ordinal which Archbishop Cranmer published in 1550, 'It is evident unto all men, diligently reading holy Scripture, and ancient authors, that from the Apostles' time there have been these orders of Ministers in Christ's church, bishops, priests and deacons'. Notwithstanding this appeal to apostolic practice, and his even stronger statements about the divine institution of the order and ministry of priests and bishops in his *On the Order and Ministry of Priests and Bishops* (1538), Cranmer significantly remodelled the episcopate as part of a general 'evangelical renovation of holy orders' (Tong, 34; MacCulloch, 454). Among his chief concerns, according to the same preface, was that no one be admitted to any of these orders 'except he were first called, tried, examined, and known, to have such qualities as were requisite for the same'. However, the new Ordinal was not received well. Controversy erupted over the extent of the ceremonial elements that remained, in particular the retention of clerical vestments. When the *Book of Common Prayer* was reissued in a revised form in 1552, it had a revised form of the Ordinal attached.

24.   In the examination of the new bishop in the 1552 Ordinal, after the first question about being called 'to this ministration according to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ and the order of this realm', the next three questions have to do with teaching and guarding the doctrine of Scripture in the churches.

> Are you persuaded that the holy Scriptures contain sufficiently all doctrine required of necessity for eternal salvation through the faith of Jesus Christ? And are you determined with the same holy Scriptures to instruct the people committed to your charge, and to teach and maintain nothing, as required of necessity to eternal salvation, but what you shall be persuaded may be concluded and proved by the same?

> Will you then faithfully exercise yourself in the said holy Scriptures, and call upon God by prayer for the true understanding of the same, so as you may be able by them to teach and exhort with wholesome doctrine, and to withstand and convince the gainsayers?

> Are you ready with all faithful diligence to banish and drive away all erroneous and strange doctrine contrary to God's word, and both privately and openly to call upon, and encourage others to the same?

Both the positive and negative aspects of this guardianship role were emphasised: to instruct, teach, and exhort on the one hand; to withstand, banish and drive away on the other. The priority of this role is demonstrated in the service by the gift of a Bible as the instrument of ministry (the presentation of a 'pastoral staff' disappeared between the first and second forms of the Ordinal) accompanied by an exhortation rich in allusions to the Pastoral epistles and the call to 'think upon these things contained in this book, be diligent in them, that the increase coming thereby may be manifest unto all men'. Cranmer's bishops were to be learned men, gifted in teaching and diligent in private study, able to discern truth from error, and prepared to call God's people to a life of obedient discipleship under the word of God.

25.   The next three questions have to do with character and demeanour.

> Will you deny all ungodliness, and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously, and Godly in this world, that you may show yourself in all things an example of good works unto others, that the adversary may be ashamed, having nothing to lay against you?

> Will you maintain and set forward (as much as shall lie in you) quietness, peace, and love, among all men? And such as be unquiet, disobedient, and criminous within your Diocese, correct and punish, according to such authority as you have by God's word, and as to you shall be committed by the ordinance of this realm?

> Will you show yourself gentle, and be merciful for Christ's sake, to poor and needy people, and to all strangers destitute of help?

Here the issues are being beyond reproach in the world, being an example among God's people, and exercising mercy and compassion towards those in need. The teaching/guardianship role is exercised within the context of a life that commends what is taught, both inside and outside the churches.

26.   The great apologists for the Elizabethan Settlement, John Jewel (1522–1571) and Richard Hooker (1554–1600), both wrote on the nature of episcopacy. Jewel, speaking in particular about the bishop of Rome, insisted 'except he do his duty as he ought to do, except he minister the sacraments, except he instruct the people, except he warn them and teach them, we say that he ought not of right once to be called a bishop' (*Defence of the Apology,* 308). Hooker's treatment is found in the seventh book of his *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, which was only published in 1662. Hooker began with the antiquity and continuity of the office.

> A thousand five hundred years and upward the Church of Christ hath now continued under the sacred Regiment of Bishops. Neither for so long hath Christianity been ever planted in any Kingdom throughout the world but with this government alone, which to have been ordained of God, I am for mine own part even as resolutely perswaded, as that any other kind of Government in the world whatsoever is of God. (*Laws,* VII.1.4)

The next question for him was whether the essentials of the reformed bishop's office and role could be compared with bishops as they operated in antiquity. This involved identifying the essentials of the office.

> A Bishop is a Minister of God, unto whom with permanent continuance, there is given not onely power of administring the Word and Sacraments, which power other Presbyters have; but also a further power to ordain Ecclesiastical persons, and a power of Cheifty in Government over Presbyters as well as Lay men, a power to be by way of jurisdiction a Pastor even to Pastors themselves. So that this Office, common unto him with other Pastors, as in ministering the Word and Sacraments: But those things incident unto his Office, which do properly make him a Bishop, cannot be common unto him with other Pastors. (*Lawes,* VII.2.3)

Three things are particularly notable here. Firstly, Hooker acknowledges much that is held in common between bishops and 'other presbyters' or 'other pastors', most importantly the administration of the Word and sacraments. Secondly, he identifies a particular distinction between the Bishop and others in the 'power to ordain Ecclesiastical persons'. The authorisation of others for public ministry in the churches is the peculiar responsibility of bishops. Thirdly, Hooker uses the expression 'a pastor even to pastors themselves'. The bishop has a special responsibility to care for those with whom he shares the ministry of the word and sacraments.

27.   It is beyond doubt that in the Reformation period the English bishops had other administrative responsibilities. In an established church the bishops had an important role in public life as well as within the congregations in their diocese. A number of bishops sat in the House of Lords as 'the Lords Spiritual'. They very often had their own secretaries and theological advisors (so John Ponet's service to Thomas Cranmer before himself becoming Bishop of Winchester). Bishops presided over diocesan administrations of various sizes and levels of complexity. However, this dimension of their life and activity did not receive explicit attention either in the Ordinal or when the office and its function were considered by Elizabethan divines. Perhaps the closest we come to a recognition of these wider activities is the description of the office as 'government of the congregation of Christ' in the 1552 Ordinal.

Thinking about Episcopacy in the Centuries Following

28.   A more elevated view of episcopacy became a feature of the High Church Anglican stream of thought and practice which first gained prominence during the reign of James I (1566-1625). Lancelot Andrewes (1555–1626), Bishop of Winchester, in correspondence with Peter Moulin, at the time a Hugenot theological student, argued for a distinction between the office of bishop and that of presbyter and insisted that the office of bishop exists by divine right, having been constituted by the apostles (*Of Episcopacy,* I.3). Intriguingly, he made clear to Moulin that 'though our Government be by Divine Right, it follows not, either that there is no salvation, or that a Church cannot stand, without it' (*Of Episcopacy,* II). Archbishop William Laud (1572–1645) argued, with copious appeal to the writings of the early church fathers, that 'it is *traditio universalis,* the constant and universal tradition of the whole Church of Christ, which is of greatest authority next to Scripture itself, that Bishops are successors of the Apostles, and Presbyters made in resemblance of the Seventy Disciples' (*Liturgy, Episcopacy and Church Ritual,* 197). He went on to defend the involvement of bishops on the Council, in the Parliament, the Star Chamber, Embassies, and civil affairs more generally (200–216). He insisted that 'our office be from God and Christ immediately' (348).

29.   Laud was executed in 1645 and the English episcopate was abolished a year later by the Long Parliament. When the monarchy was restored in 1660, so too was church government by bishops. Bishops were returned to the House of Lords, individual bishops, such as Gilbert Sheldon of London, exercised considerable influence on the new parliament, and the Savoy Conference of 1661–2 which resulted in the Act of Uniformity and the Great Ejection. However, dissenters and others still called for a more radically reformed episcopate. Richard Baxter reported the disdain for the argument of some for 'a bishop in every parish' (*Autobiography,* 260–1). Bishop James Ussher of Armagh (1581–1656) had authored *A Reduction of Episcopacy unto the form of Synodical Government received in the ancient church,* which was only published after his death. An important subtitle in the tract sets out its intention: 'How the Church might synodically be governed, archbishops and bishops being still retained' (*Reduction,* 534). Ussher argued that the most ancient form of church government was in fact a plurality of elders from which was chosen one to act as president, and later named bishop. Yet the president 'joined in the common government of the church' (*Reduction,* 532). Though long 'disused', Ussher argued it could and should be revived and he provided suggestions for synods to govern the church under episcopal leadership at the deanery, diocesan and provincial level. He even suggested that suffragans might be appointed 'conformed to the number of

the several rural deaneries' and they could then preside over the deanery synods (*Reduction,* 534–536). Ussher's proposal is an early form of the principle that Anglicans are 'episcopally led and synodically governed'. It was not taken up at the time in Britain.

30.　　The eighteenth century brought new challenges, particularly as the British colonial presence in places like India and America raised the prospect of appointing bishops to serve in those places. Timothy Cutler, the Rector of Yale University, wrote to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG) in 1724: 'I speak not this as if our condition were easy without a Bishop, for we need such a one to guide us and protect us from the scorn, insults and hardships we are exposed to …' (Perry, *Massachusetts,* 143). Many Anglicans in the colonies were keen for the guardianship and public advocacy of a bishop, particularly in the context of multiple religious groupings and denominations. The nominal oversight of the Bishop of London, exercised by commissaries, was judged insufficient. However, one difficulty, among others, was the requirement of unqualified assent to the 39 Articles and the customary oaths of allegiance as part of a bishop's consecration. The difference between the way a bishop might function in an established church (England) and in the context of multiple religious groupings and denominations (colonial America) presented a new challenge. It would not be until the 1780s, immediately after the cessation of the War of Independence, that the first American bishops were consecrated, first at the hands of nonjuring Scottish bishops and then at Lambeth with the aid of special legislation passed through the British parliament.

31.　　Notwithstanding the way political action had secured the ministry of bishops in America, the catalyst for the Tractarian movement in the early nineteenth century was political interference in the administration of the episcopate, this time in Ireland. This is what led to John Keble's famous assize sermon 'National Apostasy', delivered in Oxford in 1833. A number of the *Tracts for the Times* dealt with episcopacy in one way or another. John Henry Newman treated the idea of apostolic succession in *Tract 1* and the history and usefulness of employing suffragan bishops in *Tract 33*. A number of addresses by the High Church bishop, Thomas Wilson (1663–1755) were reprinted in the series under the title 'Bishop Wilson's Meditations on His Sacred Office' (1834–5). In what became *Tract 42* he spoke of the bishop as 'a Pastor set over other Pastors'. In *Tract 65* he commented, 'It being entirely at the Bishop's discretion, whether he will admit any one to the order of Priest or Deacon, and being not obliged to give any reason for his refusal, he will be more accountable to God, both for ordaining unfit persons, and for any prejudice against such as are worthy'.

The Episcopate Comes to Sydney

32.　　It is in this context that the first Bishop of Australia was appointed in 1836. Since 1822, oversight of the Australian church was exercised by an archdeacon licensed to the Bishop of Calcutta. William Grant Broughton had succeeded Thomas Hobbes Scott as Archdeacon of New South Wales in 1829, so he had not been in England when the Tractarian movement had begun its work. Broughton began as a traditional High Churchman, thoroughly committed to the principles of the established Church in England, but quickly adopted Tractarian principles, such as the spiritual autonomy of the church, as he became acquainted with them. However, Broughton found his Tractarian sympathies resisted by many of the clergy of the Diocese. Throughout his episcopate, however, his was 'the only institution which had any legal authority in the Church of England in Australia' (Cable & Judd, 142), then known only as the United Church of England and Ireland.

33.　　In 1855 Frederic Barker became Bishop of Sydney and Metropolitan of Australia. Barker's convinced evangelicalism contrasted with the character of Broughton's episcopate but found more resonance with the older clergy in the Diocese. Barker himself had been strongly influenced at Cambridge by Charles Simeon (the leading evangelical clergyman of his day, who mentored generations of clergy and missionaries) and then by Bishop John Bird Sumner (who as Archbishop of Canterbury would gain notoriety by upholding the cause of the evangelical clergyman George Gorham against the High Church bishop, Henry Philpotts). The influence of Simeon and Sumner can be seen in the way the necessity of both proclaiming the truth of Scripture and defending it against all attacks remained central to Barker's practice of ministry both in the parish and as a bishop.

34.　　Barker maintained a punishing schedule of pastoral visitation, preaching and public representation. He toured the entire Diocese, enacted the provisions of Thomas Moore's will in order to establish a theological college, established the Sydney Church Society to help fund ministry in Sydney after the government indicated it would phase out financial support of the churches and both the SPCK and SPG signalled they were no longer able to do so, set up new dioceses in Goulburn (1863) and Bathurst (1869), defended church schools, and paved the way for a general church property trust (Maple, 25–6). Barker was a pastor first and foremost, and then a defender of Protestant doctrine. He engaged in public debate and political lobbying in the interests of the churches and its mission, and strongly opposed Catholic doctrine. Yet he was also an excellent administrator. He saw his administrative efforts, though, as extensions of his pastoral, theological and missionary concerns.

35.   The question of synodical government in Australia had first been aired during Bishop Broughton's time. He had gathered a conference of bishops to consider the question of how the Church in Australia could better be organised back in 1850. However, there was no real progress in New South Wales until several years into Barker's episcopate. One significant change was the way Barker included laymen in the proposal. He invited the clergy of the Diocese 'to meet with lay representatives of the various parishes, for the purpose of considering the subject of synodical action' in December 1864. Two conferences were held in 1865 and the legal structures were put in place by *The Church of England Synod Act 1866.* The Constitutions annexed to this Act did, however, ensure a continuing role for episcopal leadership alongside synodical governance: '… no such … Ordinance shall take effect or have any validity unless within one month after the passing of the same the Bishop shall signify to the Synod his assent thereto'. The first Sydney Diocesan Synod met on 5 December 1866. The place of synodical government and its relation to episcopal leadership has been reaffirmed in *The Church of England Constitutions Act 1902* (the constitution of the Anglican Church within the state of New South Wales is a schedule to that Act), which provided for a meeting of the diocesan synod at least annually 'by summons of the Bishop of the Diocese', the binding nature of ordinances of the synod, and the necessity of the bishop's consent in order for ordinances to come into effect.

36.   Alfred Barry was the first Bishop of Sydney elected rather than appointed by the Crown, though the election involved the bishops of province of New South Wales as well as a committee of the Diocese. It would not be until 1909 that the Synod of the Diocese would have the unfettered right to elect its bishop. The Bishop of Sydney was styled Archbishop from 1897, as the result of Resolution 7 of the Lambeth Conference that year extending the title to all metropolitan bishops. This change in title recognised the role played by the metropolitan bishop in overseeing the work of the bishops in each of the dioceses of an ecclesiastical province. The change of title did not, however, alter the role or function of the Archbishop either in the Diocese or in the Province.

37.   The first suffragan or bishop coadjutor, Gerard D'Arcy-Irvine, was consecrated in 1926. The Archbishop of Sydney was assisted by one suffragan until 1940 when William Hilliard joined Venn Pilcher in supporting Archbishop Mowll. By the end of Archbishop Mowll's time there were four suffragans (Pilcher, Hilliard, Kerle and Loane). These suffragans had no particular geographical base but supported the Archbishop in his teaching and leadership, as well as sharing in his pastoral and administrative load. However, in the late 1960s regions began to be formed within the Diocese of Sydney and the bishops coadjutor became regional bishops, beginning with Gordon Begbie in Parramatta. The regional bishops exercise pastoral responsibility with their region, assist with confirmations and ordinations in their region, chair the regional council, and in addition assist in the administration of the Diocese as a whole. In time each of the regions would also have their own archdeacon with particular administrative responsibilities within the region.

38.   Over the last half a century, a distinctive ecclesiology has developed in Sydney which emphasises the priority of the local congregation of God's people over the central institutional structure of the denomination. This refinement of the prevailing Anglican view of church centred on the bishop or larger ecclesiastical structures arose from theological reflection upon the New Testament's use of the word *ekklēsia* and concept of church, and developed the definition of church given in Article 19 of the 39 Articles of Religion (Robinson, 'Church'; Knox, 'De-Mythologising'). The church is the gathering of God's people around God, present in his word and by his Spirit, in order to hear and respond to his word with repentance and faith and with the loving service of each other. However, this priority has never meant that there are no bonds or obligations of love and service beyond the local congregation (Knox, 31). The churches are united in a fellowship which serves the needs of the gospel mission and enables each to do what they would not be able to do on their own. The supra-congregational structures and offices serve that mission as well. In this context, Donald Robinson would write in 1988, 'We need to recover the model of the bishop as evangelist' (Robinson, 'Bishop', 87).

39.   As the Diocese became more complex, the responsibilities of the Archbishop and the assistant or regional bishops increased. In 2009 the website of the Sydney Diocesan Secretariat described the role of the Archbishop of Sydney as follows:

> … an ordained minister of the Word and Sacraments who has been consecrated a bishop and elected by the Synod. According to the Ordinal the central ministerial functions of a bishop are to instruct and teach, to correct false doctrine, to live a life that is an example to others, to maintain order, to ordain, to confirm baptised persons and to assist the poor and needy. He is the 'guardian of spiritualities' and he is sometimes called the 'Ordinary', meaning one who has jurisdiction in ecclesiastical matters within a diocese.

The Archbishop is also described as the one responsible for maintaining order in the Diocese through such functions as:

… appointing or licensing clergy to minister in parochial units and chaplaincies, licensing and consecrating churches, visiting and correcting the clergy, appointing a registrar, a chancellor and other office holders, and authorising lay ministry.

An indication of the complexity of the task in the contemporary setting is the observation that the Archbishop is 'a member ex-officio of about 25 diocesan organisations and appoints persons as members of many organisations. He is the President of the Synod and its Standing Committee, and of the Provincial Synod and its Standing Committee'.

40.   From its very beginning, the office of the Bishop or Archbishop of Sydney has been a public office which has provided an important link between the churches and the wider community. The Archbishop has represented the interests of the Diocese, and the gospel mission to which it is committed, to Governors and the State Parliament and has acted as a public spokesman for the Diocese in matters of common concern. Christmas and Easter messages have been reported and broadcast. Bishop Barker was a very public advocate of the importance of Christian education for the good of the community as a whole and Archbishops Wright and Mowll played important roles in the community during the two World Wars. In the cultural and moral turmoil of the last quarter of a century Archbishops of Sydney have made key contributions to public debate. Though this public, representative role is not explicitly referenced in either the New Testament or in the Anglican Ordinal, it stands in continuity with the actual practice of bishops in the early church and at the time of the Reformation.

Legal Responsibilities and Constraints

41.   The Archbishop of Sydney is an ecclesiastical office which carries with it certain legal responsibilities and constraints. The Schedule to the 1902 Act insists that 'All ordinances of the Synod shall be binding upon the Bishop and the Bishop's successors and all other members of the Church within the Diocese' (section 2(2)). By the same Act, the president of the synod (which except in his absence is the Archbishop) is prevented from voting on any question or matter arising in the Synod (section 5(e)).

42.   In addition to the ordinances of the Sydney Synod and the Acts of Parliament on which they rest, the Archbishop must also act within the Constitution of Anglican Church of Australia (1961) and its canons where they have been adopted by the Sydney Synod. That Constitution declares 'There shall be a bishop of each diocese who shall be elected as may be prescribed by or under the constitution of the diocese, provided that the election shall as to the canonical fitness of the person elected be subject to confirmation as prescribed by ordinance of the provincial synod' (para 8). The test of canonical fitness, as outlined by a General Synod canon of 1989 (amended in 1994) and adopted by the Diocese of Sydney in 1995, is threefold: (a) the person has attained at least 30 years of age; (b) the person has been baptised; and (c) the person is in priests' orders.

43.   Various ordinances of the Sydney Synod have provided that the Archbishop is the President or a member of most diocesan bodies. While in practice each archbishop has selected which boards and committees he will attend personally, he retains the right to be present at each of those of which he is president or chair.

The Contemporary Role of the Archbishop of Sydney

44.   The biblical principles of oversight or *episkopē*, refracted through this history, have shaped the contemporary role and function of the Archbishop of Sydney. Sydney's episcopate is resolutely evangelical, in keeping with the Diocese it serves, and its archbishops have very largely been pastors and teachers, guardians and representatives of the Protestant faith, and able administrators. However, as Sydney has grown and as the structures of the Diocese and the denomination have developed, legal and institutional responsibilities have become more prominent. Nevertheless, the leadership of the Diocese of Sydney by its Archbishop, though very much personal and so influenced by the personality, gifts and special interests of each incumbent, has developed a discernible character. Our evangelical conviction demands that we ensure that the character of the archiepiscopal office, and by extension the regional bishops who assist him, faithfully reflects the biblical functions and priorities of oversight.

45.   The first priority of the Archbishop of Sydney is to be a **guardian** of 'the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints' (Jude 3). This is the priority found in the New Testament and in the Anglican Ordinal. Through public proclamation and defence of the apostolic gospel, by his personal example and in all his pastoral and administrative activity, he is to do all in his power to ensure that the teaching of Scripture shapes and directs the life, ministry and mission of the Diocese. This requires the courage to speak the truth taught in Scripture when it is not popular, but equally to oppose deviation from that truth where it arises. It requires both teaching and the exercise of discipline. It requires making decisions on the basis of theological principles shaped by the biblical gospel. In this way the Archbishop of Sydney will, as Sir Marcus Loane once put it, 'share the heritage and tradition of this diocese, and will interpret it to others, and transmit it to posterity' (*Synod Presidential Address, 1966*).

46.   A second priority of the Archbishop of Sydney is to **order the ministry** of the Diocese to the gospel of Christ and his mission. In many ways this is merely an extension of the first priority. Principally this involves the selection and authorisation of appropriate men and women for various ministries within the Diocese. Appointing people of godly character with theological clarity, pastoral sensitivity, and demonstrably in possession of the gifts and skills appropriate for the ministry under consideration, is a prime way the Archbishop can foster the health and gospel-mindedness of the Diocese. However, once again this must extend to dealing appropriately with those whose discharge of the responsibilities entrusted to them has been negligent in some fashion or contrary to the teaching of Scripture. Furthermore, the ordering of ministry to the gospel of Christ also involves encouraging and facilitating the reform of ministries where, for one reason or another, they no longer serve the mission of reaching the lost and building up believers.

47.   A third priority is to exercise **pastoral concern and insight** as he provides advice and direction for gospel ministry in the Diocese. This has been the self-understanding of bishops throughout the twentieth century and this expression has been a regular feature in presidential addresses to election synods in the Diocese (Gunther 1909; Kirkby 1933; Barnett 2001; Forsyth 2013). This has not meant the Archbishop is expected to act as pastor to every Anglican in the Diocese, nor even to be the principal 'pastor to the pastors'. Rather, the Archbishop models pastoral care in all his interactions and so helps to encourage throughout the Diocese a commitment to thoughtful, caring relationships in which the spiritual welfare of the other person is of paramount concern.

48.   A fourth priority is to **represent the Diocese**, in various national and international bodies, to the government, and generally to the community. As we have seen, this role arises from history rather than directly from the biblical text or the Ordinal. Nevertheless, it is another significant way in which the guardianship of gospel truth and mission is exercised by the Archbishop of Sydney and has been a feature of the office from its inception. This public role requires a humble confidence in the theological convictions and character of the Diocese of Sydney, since *this* is the Diocese that is being represented. In the denominational context, the Archbishop of Sydney ought to be a clear voice for an unambiguously biblical, evangelical Anglicanism, willing to stand alongside all who seek to live and serve in a way that is directed and disciplined by the word of God. In the rapidly changing context of Christian witness in this city and nation it requires a degree of mental agility and apologetic skill to handle opposition and even hostility with grace and humility and yet with the courage to present the truth of Scripture as it bears on the subject at hand.

49.   A fifth priority is the **administration** of the Diocese in line with its mission. The diligent attention to administration is not to be seen as a distraction from ministry but rather serving the interests of ministry. The governance, policies and processes of the Diocese ought to facilitate its mission and a proper administration of them will direct them to this end. In a diocese with five assistant bishops, the administrative burden need not fall on the Archbishop alone, or perhaps even principally. One or more of the assistant bishops may be more able in this area and so able to shoulder much of the load. Yet faithful administration is itself a form of guardianship and the reason why bishops and the Archbishop play a key role on boards and committees of the Diocese is to ensure that all its organisations order themselves and their activities by the gospel and the commission we have received from Christ, reflecting the theological ethos and the priorities of the Diocese.

50.   Ultimately, what will shape the Archbishop of Sydney more than any other single factor is his personal walk with Christ. His Christian character, his prayerfulness, his faithful obedience to the word of God, his loving care for both the lost and the redeemed, his courageous determination to proclaim the truth and to refute error, and possessing a keen sense of his accountability to the Chief Shepherd (1 Pet 5:4) are critical to the faithful and effective discharge of this responsibility. Under God's good hand, the history of this Diocese is full of bishops and archbishops who were exactly like this and whose ministry has furthered the mission of the gospel, brought blessing to God's people, and honoured the name of Christ.

On behalf of the Sydney Doctrine Commission

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Chair

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