



The Qualifications of a Bishop



Etymology of the title of Bishop Greek Word (Episkopos)
A Bishop, An Elder, see Acts 20:17 with verse 28.

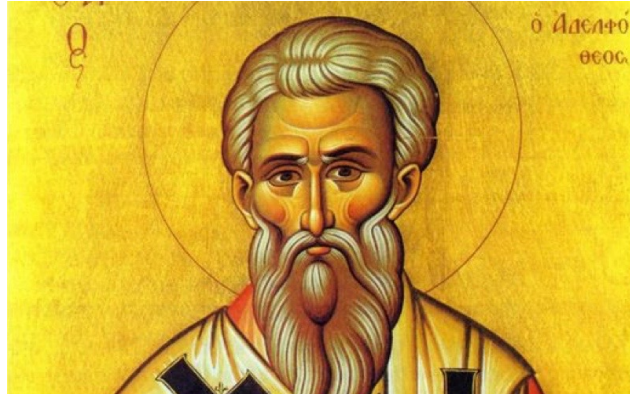
The Greek word (ἐπισκοπῆς/*episcopase*) is where we get our English word for bishop.

There are still several English translations that use *bishop* instead of *overseer*.

The word indicates one who has been given authority or responsibility to govern or *oversee* a group/estate/or situation.

A careful study of the New Testament will reveal that this word is used interchangeably with another Greek word (πρεσβύτερος/*presbyter*).

Who was the First Bishop?



In Acts 11:30 and Acts 15:22,

We see a collegiate system of government in Jerusalem chaired by James the Just, according to tradition the first bishop of the city.

Acts 11:30 (NIV)

30 This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul.

Acts 15:22 (NIV)

The Council's Letter to Gentile Believers

22 Then the apostles and elders, with the whole church, decided to choose some of their own men and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They chose Judas (called Barsabbas) and Silas, men who were leaders among the believers.

Bishop is often translated as *elder*.

In fact when we look at Paul's letter to Titus (1:5) we notice that a very similar list of character traits and qualifications for the *elder* is given.

What are we to make of this?

We should understand that the elder and the overseer are one and the same.

Ephesians 4:11

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers,

1 Timothy 4:2

by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron,

1 Peter 5:3

nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.

James 5:14

Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord;

Acts 6:4

But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”

Mark 16:15

And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.

2 Corinthians 3:6

who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

2 Corinthians 4:1

Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we received mercy, we do not lose heart,

2 Corinthians 5:18

Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation,

Acts 20:28

Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

1 Peter 5:2

shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness;

Old English *bisceop* "bishop, high priest (Jewish or pagan)," from Late Latin *episcopus*, from Greek *episkopos* "watcher, (spiritual) overseer," a title for various government officials, later taken over in a Church sense, from *epi-* "over" (see [epi-](#)) + *skopos* "one that watches, one that looks after; a guardian, protector" (from PIE root [*spek-](#) "to observe").

Given a specific sense in the Church, but the word also was used in the New Testament as a descriptive title for elders, and continues as such in some non-hierarchical Christian sects.

Late Latin *episcopus* in Spanish became *obispo*, in Italian *vescovo*, in Welsh *esgob*.

The Germanic forms include Old Saxon *biscop*, Old High German *bischof*.

Further afield it became Lithuanian *vyskupas*, Albanian *upeshk*, Finnish *piispa*.

A once-popular pun on it was *bite-sheep* (1550s, also in German, *biss-schaf*).

The chess piece (formerly *archer*, before that *alfin*) called from 1560s.

Bishop, in some Christian churches, the chief pastor and overseer of a diocese, an area containing several congregations.

Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and other churches have maintained the view that bishops are the successors of the Apostles and that an unbroken line of succession connects the Apostles to all legitimate bishops, a doctrine known as apostolic succession.

Until February 11, 1989, when Barbara Harris was ordained a bishop in the Episcopal Church in the United States of America, the apostolic-succession churches had reserved the office only for men.

Although the New Testament mentions the office of bishop, its origins are obscure.

It seems that the episcopacy—or threefold ministry of bishops, priests, and deacons, was well established in the Christian church by the 2nd century ce.

From the Roman Empire's recognition of Christianity in the 4th century until the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century, the bishop was the chief pastor, priest, administrator, and ruler of his diocesan Christian community.

He was the chief liturgical minister; he baptized, celebrated the Eucharist, ordained, absolved, controlled church finances, and settled matters of dispute.

St. Augustine



In the course of the Reformation, some of the new Protestant churches repudiated the office of the bishop, partly because they believed the office to have acquired such broad temporal and civil powers during the Middle Ages as to endanger its spiritual purity, and partly because they saw no basis for the institution in the New Testament.

Thus, of the post-Reformation Christian communions, only the Roman Catholics, the Eastern Orthodox, Old Catholics, Anglicans, and a few others have maintained both the bishop's office and the belief that bishops have continued the apostolic succession.

Some Lutheran Churches (in the United States, Scandinavia, and Germany) have bishops, but, except for those in Sweden, they have not maintained the doctrine of apostolic succession.

Most other Protestant churches do not have bishops.

In the United Methodist Church in the United States, bishops function as superintendents of several congregations and have the power to ordain ministers.

In other Protestant churches, bishops have various functions. Popes, cardinals, archbishops, patriarchs, and metropolitans are different gradations of bishops.

A bishop is often assisted in the administration of his diocese by other, lesser bishops, who may be known as suffragans, assistants, auxiliaries, or coadjutor bishops.

Bishops alone have the right to confirm and ordain members of the clergy, and their main duty is to supervise the clergy within their diocese.

In the Roman Catholic Church, the bishop is selected by the pope and receives confirmation in his office at the hands of an archbishop and two other bishops.

In the Anglican and other churches, a bishop is chosen by the dean and chapter of the cathedral of a diocese.

In the Methodist churches, the bishop is chosen by jurisdictional conferences.

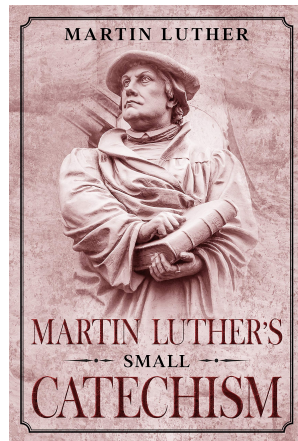
Among the insignia traditional to a bishop are a mitre, pastoral staff, pectoral cross, ring, and *caligae* (i.e., stockings and sandals).

Catechism, a manual of religious instruction usually arranged in the form of questions and answers used to instruct the young, to win converts, and to testify to the faith.

Although many religions give instruction in the faith by means of oral questions and answers, the written catechism is primarily a product of Christianity.

Some early handbooks of instruction were prepared by the church fathers (including Augustine of Hippo, John Chrysostom, and Cyril of Jerusalem), and many were prepared throughout medieval times.

The term catechism, however, was evidently first used for written handbooks in the 16th century.



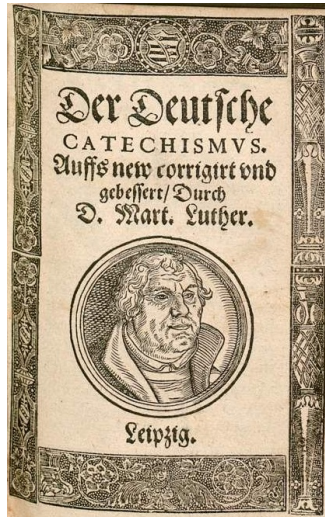
After the invention of printing and the 16th-century Reformation, catechisms became much more important, both in Protestantism and Roman Catholicism.

These catechisms were influenced by the medieval catechism, which had imitated the works of the Church Fathers. The medieval catechisms concentrated upon the meaning of faith (the Apostles' Creed), hope (the Lord's Prayer), and charity (the Ten Commandments).

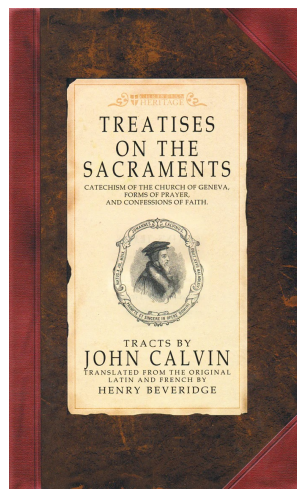
The later catechisms usually included discussions of these three subjects and added others.

Perhaps the most influential book produced by any Reformer was Martin Luther's Small Catechism (1529), which added discussions of baptism and the Eucharist to the usual three subjects.

Luther's Large Catechism (1529) was intended for use by the clergy.



John Calvin published a catechism in 1537 that was intended to instruct children.



It proved too difficult, so he prepared an easier version in 1542.

The Heidelberg Catechism (1563) of Caspar Olevianus and Zacharias Ursinus (revised by the Synod of Dort in 1619) became the most widely used catechism in the Reformed churches.

The standard Presbyterian catechisms have been the Westminster Larger and Shorter Catechisms, completed by the Westminster Assembly in 1647.

The Anglican catechism is included in *The Book of Common Prayer*.

The first part was probably prepared by Thomas Cranmer and Nicholas Ridley in 1549 and was modified several times before 1661.

A second part, discussing the meaning of the two sacraments, was prepared in 1604 in response to a suggestion of the Puritan faction of the Hampton Court Conference.

The most famous Roman Catholic catechism was one by Peter Canisius, a Jesuit, first published in 1555, which went through 400 editions in 150 years.

One that had a large circulation and greatly influenced later works was that of Robert Bellarmine (1597).

In France, those of Edmond Auger (1563) and Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet (1687) were outstanding.

In more recent times, well-known Roman Catholic catechisms have included the Baltimore Catechism (1885) in the United States, A Catechism of Christian Doctrine (“Penny Catechism”) in England (1898), and that of Joseph Deharbe (1847) in Germany.

In 1992 the Vatican issued a new universal *Catechism of the Catholic Church* that summarized the church’s doctrinal positions and teachings since the second Vatican Council (1962–65).

The new catechism abandoned the question-and-answer form and used modern language in its prescriptions on faith, the sacraments, sin, and prayer.

In reaction to the work of the Jesuits and the Reformed church among the Orthodox, Peter Mogila composed *The Orthodox Confession of Faith*.

It was approved at a provincial synod in 1640 and standardized by the synod of Jerusalem in 1672.

By order of the Russian tsar Peter I the Great, a smaller Orthodox catechism was prepared in 1723.



Friends, Please remember, You can't buy your way into heaven OR out of hell.

Rev. Jesus Del Rio, Ed