**Addendum to Section 3 – *Overseer / Bishop***

**B. The second term to consider is 'Overseer / Bishop'** –

επισκοπος / **episcopos** – a compound word – epi (over) / scopeo (to watch, oversee); but historically transliterated (not translated) as 'bishop.'

**1. The *obscuration* of the meaning of the word**

**Greek** – *επισκοπος* (episcopos)

**Latin** – *episcopus,* *biscopus*

**Old High German** – *biscof, piscof*

**Middle & Modern German** – *bischof*

**Middle Dutch** – *biskop, bisscop, bisschop*

**Old English** (Some of the many forms)

*biscop, bisceop, bischop, bisshop, biscob, bishcob, bisshup, biscopp, bisscop, bisskop, bissop, byssop, bishoppe, bisschop, bishope, bishopp, busshop, bysshop, byshop, byschope, byschoppe, bischoipp, biszhop, bushhopp, byshehoppe, bisshope, bushop, biship, busschope.*

**Middle English (A.D. 1150-1470)** – *bishop*

**Wycliffe's** Translation (from the Latin), 1382 –

*bischopis*

**Instead of using the original languages (Hebrew and Greek), Wycliffe used the Latin to translate the Bible into English.** They were translated from contemporary manuscripts of the Latin Vulgate.

**Tyndale's** Translation, 1526 – *bysshope*

**Great Bible** (Thomas Cranmer), 1539 – *bisshoppe*

**Geneva Bible**, 1560 – *Bishoppe*

**KJV** 'Translation', 1611 – *bishop*

**Post-KJV Translations**

Those that transliterate *επισκοπος* / *episcopos* as *bishop*

Conybeare & Howson, 1864

ASV, 1901

Weymouth, 1903

Moffatt, 1913

Ogden, 1940

JB Phillips, 1958

NKJV, 1979

Those that *"translate" επισκοπος* / *episcopos* differently

Rotherham's, 1872 – ***overseer***

20th-Century, 1902 – ***presiding officer***

Fenton, 1903 – *overseership*

Goodspeed, 1927 – ***superintendent***

Williams, 1937 – ***pastor***

NASB / NIV, 1971, 1978 – ***overseer***

**2. Three views of the titles *overseer* and *elder***

“… synonyms … **same persons … same duties** …

… **different functions** … discharged by the **same individuals**

… **distinct** … as regards his **duties and his gifts**.” Bernard, *Pastorals*, p.lvii

**3. The *historical* development of distinction**

“The history of the Church leaves us no room for doubt that on the death of the Apostles … **one amongst the presbyters of each church was selected to preside over the rest, and to him was applied emphatically the title of *the* bishop or overseer, which had previously belonged equally to all**; thus, he became in reality (what he was sometimes called) the successor to the Apostles.” Conybeare & Howson, p.434

“History seems to show decisively that before the middle of the second century each church or organized Christian community had its **three orders of ministers, its bishops, its presbyters, and its deacons**.” Lightfoot, *Philippians*, p.186

“If bishop was at first used as a synonyme [sic] for presbyter and afterwards came to designate the higher officer under whom the presbyters served, the episcopate properly so called would seem to have developed from the subordinate office. In other words, the episcopate was formed not out of the apostolic order by localization, but out of the presbyterial by elevation: and the title, which originally was common to all, came at length to be appropriated to the chief among them.” Lightfoot, p.196

**Note: these are historical observations, *not* recognitions of a divine mandate, and in fact are even contradictory to Divine revelation.**

**4. Recognition of a threefold order of ministry**

**early in the life of the church -- bishop, priest / pastor, deacon**

**a. Different functions of Elders and Overseers**

“The special function of the **bishop** in this matter is that of **communication with other Churches** … the special function of the **presbyters** is to **teach**, and they have also … certain ruling powers, they preside over the Church.” Bernard, p.lxii

**b. Elders and overseers are different**

“The evidence so far would give, as it seems, **no good ground for identifying the *episcopos* with the *presbuteros***; the terms are distinct in meaning and are kept fairly distinct in usage, the *bishop* being more of an official, the *presbyter* more of a pastor in our modern sense -- both apparently having certain judicial functions. But whether they were applied to distinct individuals in the earliest Christian age is a more difficult question.” Bernard, p.lxvii

**5. Source of the office?**

“But what of the episcopos … And have we any hint as to the origin of the term? It seems probable, on the whole, that **the title of this office was taken over from the organization of the contemporary Greek societies**. … no mention in the N.T. documents of episcopos at Jerusalem … while they appear … where Greek influences were dominant … common in the LXX.” Bernard, p.lxix

**6. Historical observations**

“These conclusions are four in number.

(1) the episcopate and presbyterate **were distinct in origin and function**; the difference of name points to a difference in duty

(2) the bishops were originally **selected by the presbyterial council**, and probably from their own body.

(3) there were often **several bishops in one place**, the number being a matter non-essential.

(4) A conspicuous part **of the bishop's duty was the administration of worship** -- the liturgy in the largest sense; he is above all things an official, the representative of his church and the director of its discipline.” Bernard, p.lxxii

**7. John Calvin swayed by History – *not* Biblical data**

“All those to whom the office of teaching was enjoined they called 'presbyters.' In each city these chose one of their number to whom they specially gave the title 'bishop' in order that dissentions might not arise (as commonly happens) from equality of rank. Still, the bishop was not so much higher in honor and dignity as to have lordship over his colleagues.” Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.4.2, p.1069

**8. Just criticism of the 'office' of Bishop**

“Ordinary ministers conform to the instituted church and are not ecumenical, national, provincial, or diocesan bishops, but rather elders of one congregation. In the same sense they are also called bishops in the Scriptures.... Those superior members of a hierarchy are merely **human creations brought into the church without divine precept or example. They cannot fill the office of pastor in so many various congregations. They rob the churches of their liberty, while exercising a kind of regal or, rather, tyrannical dominion over them and their pastors.** They have brought in with them the Roman Antichrist himself as the head, and as the tail of this wild beast the chancellors, suffragans, archdeacons, officials, and similar props of the hierarchy (whose very names are apocryphal and altogether unknown among the first churches) to the utter oppression of the churches of God.” Ames, *Marrow of Theology*, p.209

**9. Denominations still recognizing the office of Bishop**

African Methodist Episcopal Church, Anglican Church, Eastern Orthodox Church, Episcopal Church, Latter-Day Saints, Lutheran Church (some), Mennonite Church, Methodist Church, Roman Catholic Church, Pentecostal Churches (Apostolic, Assemblies of God, Vineyard, Church of God, Foursquare), Seventh Day Adventists