

Bishop of London ^[1]

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by John K. Nelson, 2006

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During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the bishop of London had extradiocesan responsibility for Anglican congregations and clergy outside the British Isles. The precise legal and ecclesiastical terms of the bishop's duties concerning the American [colonies](#) ^[3] were never officially or legally spelled out (except briefly during [Edmund Gibson](#) ^[4]'s tenure from 1723 to 1748), and [colonial](#) ^[5] affairs necessarily took a back seat to the primary concerns of the bishop of London as an officer of state, a member of the House of Lords, and the spiritual and temporal administrator of a large, critically important, and demanding diocese.

Anglican clergy serving in North Carolina, as in all other British overseas possessions, had to secure a license from the bishop of London identifying their charge and qualifying them to receive the king's (or queen's) bounty, which helped to cover travel expenses. Prospective clergy, including increasing numbers of colonials, attracted to overseas ministry looked to the bishop of London for ordination. The responsibility for licensing and ordination added substantially to the bishop's workload, but the registers, correspondence, recommendations, and credentials collected at [Fulham Palace](#) ^[6], the bishop's official residence, now afford scholars the most important manuscript collection for the study of colonial Anglicanism.

References:

George MacLaren Brydon, *Virginia's Mother Church and the Political Conditions under Which It Grew* (2 vols., 1947).

Arthur Lyon Cross, *The Anglican Episcopate and the American Colonies* (1902).

Additional Resources:

Edmund Gibson Papers, Oxford Univeristy: <http://www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/dept/scwmss/wmss/online/1500-1900/gibson/gibson.html> ^[4]

Subjects:

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[Early Statehood \(1789-1820\)](#) ^[9]

[Law and legal history](#) ^[10]

Authors:

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From:

[Encyclopedia of North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press.](#) ^[12]

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