

having a leadership in their areas. But that is as far as it goes. It is not a power to dictate to others in the area.

The churches, then, in the ~~Nxtxtxttmtm~~ ancient church, is very little evidence of any individual having a authority over more than one church, or at least over the churches of more than one city, very little, though there is a definite situation in which the authority is pretty much centralized in one bishop, one man, in the church. And, of course, in the days of persecution, in days of the difficulties which were faced, it almost inevitably comes that if an organization is going to weather the storms, you just about have to put the authority in one individual's hands pretty much. It is necessary in a crisis. It is necessary in a crisis, and it is almost a necessity if there is going to be forward motion. If there is going to be active development, to have the definite work of the active ~~xxx~~ development rather centralized in its direction. But among the church, we do not have any hierarchical organization. We have a recognition of unity, when one bishop excommunicated another, and it was not expected that another bishop would receive him. But there are cases where they did. And there are cases where there was disagreement among the bishops. But when one bishop excommunicated a man, another bishops would not receive him into communion, unless they had grounds for believing that his one had been in error in what he had done. He has ruled himself out of the visible church by his disloyalty or by his sin.

We have, from very early days, ~~xxxxxxx~~ synods, gatherings of councils, gatherings of people in various ~~xxxxxxx~~ areas, gatherings of bishops, usually. And then, of course, we have the Council of Nicea, the first one, which was supposed to be an ecumenical council. And which calimed to determine what the Word of God ~~xxxxix~~ meant, and consequently what should be effective in the church for the entire church. The first organization to do that was the Council of Nicea. After apostolic days, which was this one, but we have many such ones before that in certain areas. ~~xxxx~~

And so we have an idea of the unity of the visible church. Pretty widely held, at that time. And the unity being a unity within a geographical area.