

# Fragment on early Church government

**Author:** Isaac Newton

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## VI.

In the first ages of the Christian religion the Christians of every city were governed by a Council of Presbyters or Elders & the President of the Council was the Bishop of the City. And the Bishop of one city meddled not with the affairs of another except by admonitory Letters. Nor did the Bishops of several cities meet together in Councils before the reign of the Emperor Commodus. For they could not meet without the leave of the Roman governours of Provinces. But about that time they began to meet in Provincial Councils; first in Asia in opposition to the Cataphrygian heresy, & soon after in other places & upon other occasions. And the Bishop of the head city or Metropolis of the Roman Province was usually made President of the Council. And hence came the authority of Metropolitan Bishops above that of the other Bishops of the Province. Hence also it was that the Bishop of Rome in Cyprians days called himself the Bishop of Bishops. And as soon as the Empire became Christian the Roman Emperors began to call General Councils out of all the Provinces of the Empire & by prescribing to them what points they should consider & influencing them by their interest & power they set up what party they pleased & thereby the Greek Empire became the king who [in matters of religion] did according to his will & [in legislature] exalted & magnified himself above every God, & at length in the seventh general Council established the worship of the Images & souls of dead men, here called Mahuzzims.

Eusebius in his Ecclesiastical history –

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