

"They first desire to be deacons, but not such as the scripture describes, but such as devour widows' houses, and for pretence sake long prayers, and, therefore, shall receive a heavier judgment. Such deacons, consequently, will go about to seize the high chairs of presbyters, (*Primas cathaedras*). Some, also, not content with that, attempt more, in order that they may be called bishops, that is, rabbi; but they ought to understand, that a bishop must be blameless, and have the rest of the qualities described there, (Titus 1:6, etc.) so that, though men should not give such a one the name of bishop, yet ye will be a bishop before God."

- (8) Gregory Thaumaturgus, bishop of Neocaesarea, a pupil of Origen

Gregory, bishop of Nyssa, wrote the following account of this man's introduction into the Christian ministry:

"Being much set on the study of philosophy, he was afraid of engaging in the pastoral charge, and, therefore, avoided all occasions in which he might have been laid hold on, and ordained; which, Phedimus, a neighboring bishop, observing, though Gregory was then distant three days' journey from him, he did, by prayer, dedicate him to the service of God, at Neo-Caesarea, where there were, then, but seventeen Christians; to which the other submitted, and came and served there."

Gregory's only subordinate was one deacon. He had no elders.

- (9) Cyprian, bishop of Carthage (A.D. 248)

In Cyprian's view, the bishop is not distinguished from the other presbyters by any higher order, or by any exclusive authority and prerogatives. He allows him indeed a primacy of office as president, but not of order, as prelates claim. Cyprian nowhere recognizes the existence of an order of bishops having the sole power of ordination, government, and discipline; and essentially distinct from presbyters. On the contrary, he everywhere divides the clergy into two classes, the one including bishops and presbyters, and the other deacons.

The Cyprianic bishop did not have sole or absolute power. He did not have the presidency over a plurality of congregations. He did not have a negative voice in the councils of the church. He ruled the church in common with the other presbyters, though, as president, he was called bishop. He did nothing of importance without consulting his presbyters. He was chosen by the people of his charge. He administered the ordinances. He recognized in his associate presbyters the power, by divine right, to govern the church, and discharge every ministerial function, during his absence. He even gives to the presbyters the name *praepositus* or president, which he assumes to himself. He attributes to bishops no greater preeminence over presbyters than Peter had over the other apostles.