

However he could not...

have sole power of ordination  
exercise sole power of government/discipline  
exercise power over a plurality of congregations  
override the collective opposition of other  
bishops.

There were a number of factors behind this growth of influence and we are able to mention a few:

- the loss of the Apostles and the need for a more visible leadership
- the development of sects and cults and the syncretized ideas that were found in some part of the church.
- the suasion of pagan philosophy external to the church but powerful in its direction.
- the persecution--although sporadic at times, nevertheless a factor to give pause in the pursuit of religious life.
- the questions raised by the lapsed of the church following persecution periods and the manner in which these were to be dealt with.

Likely there were other factors also but these were large segments of the difficulty that made the church feel the need for a stronger centralized office. To Cyprian, the consummate number of bishops was the church. He made no special deferment to any other bishop but upheld all bishops in the maintenance of their offices. To him the bishops had "inherited" the power of the apostles and were now the life line to the building of the church. If you are smiling at his ideas...just stop for a moment and think of how some regard the church today... some outside the hierarchical systems, that is.

#### 4. Attached importance to services, sacraments, etc.

A fuller study of the sacraments is just a few pages ahead of us. But in the early church period they took on increasing significance in the life of the church. Baptism was rather regularly associated with the fact of regeneration, communion with the participation in the Lord's life. There is nothing to indicate that other ceremonies had the importance of the sacraments in the early church although chrisom (we would call it confirmation...the extending of the right hand of fellowship, etc., today) had a very high place of meaning. The forms of the services grow in significance as well as the ideals attached thereto.

Likewise the canonical structure of church life increases particularly after the onset of the great councils. Church life is more militantly defined and overseen. Some of this grew from the legal status of Christianity and the preferred position it enjoyed with the state.