

**Hossius of Cordoba as catalyzing agent for the convening  
of the First Ecumenical Council**  
**Osio de Córdoba como agente catalizador para la convocatoria  
del Primer Concilio Ecuménico**

Eirini ARTEMI

National and Capodistrian University of Athens

[eartemi@theol.uoa.gr](mailto:eartemi@theol.uoa.gr)

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**Abstract:** Hossius of Cordoba (c. 256 – 359), also known as Osius or Hossius was elected to the see of Cordoba of Spain about 295, he narrowly escaped martyrdom in the persecution of Maximian. The year AD 303 saw a harsh persecution of the Christians throughout the empire. In 313 he appears at the imperial court of Great Constantine, being expressly mentioned by name in a constitution directed by the emperor to Caecilianus of Carthage in that year. That period of time a dangerous heresy which threatened the Christian theology, appeared in the Empire. The heresy was Arianism and its leader was Arius. So, the latter was notable primarily, because of his role in the Arian controversy, a great fourth-century theological conflict that rocked the Christian world and led to the calling of the First Ecumenical Council of the Church. This controversy centered upon the nature of the Son of God, and his precise relationship to God the Father. In 323 Hossius was the bearer of Constantine's letter to Bishop Alexander and Arius, in which he urged them to reconciliation. On the failure of the negotiations in Egypt, Constantine convened the Council of Nicaea, probably in agreement with Pope of Rome Sylvester I, and perhaps on the advice of Hossius. Perhaps, he presided, although it is unclear whether he did so in the name of the pope or was nominated by Constantine. The Bishop of Cordoba took an active part in drawing up its canons and the Nicene Creed. After the Council, He returned to his diocese in Spain.

**Keywords:** Hossius of Cordoba; First Ecumenical Council; Nicene Creed; Arianism; Arius; Constantine the Great.

**Resumen:** Osio de Córdoba (c 256 - 359), también conocido como Osio o Osio fue elegido para la sede de Córdoba de España alrededor de 295, se escapó por el martirio en la persecución de Maximiano. En 313 aparece en la corte imperial de Gran Constantino, se menciona expresamente por su nombre en una constitución dirigida por el emperador a Ceciliano de Cartago en ese año. Ese período de tiempo que una peligrosa herejía que amenazaba la teología cristiana, apareció en el Imperio. La herejía era el arrianismo y su líder era Arrio. Por lo tanto, este último fue notable principalmente, debido a su papel en la controversia arriana, un gran conflicto teológico del siglo IV que sacudió al mundo cristiano y dio lugar a la convocatoria del Primer Concilio Ecuménico de la Iglesia. Esta controversia se centró en la naturaleza del Hijo de Dios, y su relación precisa con Dios el Padre. En 323 Osio fue el portador de la carta de Constantino al obispo Alejandro y Arrio, en la que los instó a la reconciliación. En el fracaso de las negociaciones en Egipto, Constantino convocó el Concilio de Nicea, probablemente, de acuerdo con el Papa de Roma Silvestre I, y tal vez en el consejo de Osio. Tal vez, él presidió, aunque no está claro si lo hizo en el nombre del Papa o fue nominado por Constantino. El obispo de Córdoba tomó parte activa en la elaboración de sus cánones y el Credo de Nicea. Después del Concilio, regresó a su diócesis en España.

**Palabras clave:** Osio de Córdoba; Primer Concilio Ecuménico; Credo de Nicea; arrianismo; Arrio; Constantino el Grande.

**Summary:** 1. Introduction: The foundation of Christianity as the basic religion of Byzantine Empire. 2. The role of Hossius of Cordoba in the defence of Arianism. 2.1. Arianism. 2.2. Hossius de Cordoba and his influence to Great Constantine. Bibliography.

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## **1. Introduction: The foundation of Christianity as the basic religion of Byzantine Empire.**

The spread of Christianity was made a lot easier by the efficiency of the Roman Empire, but its principles were sometimes misunderstood and membership of the sect could be dangerous. Although Jesus had died, his message had not. Word of his teachings spread to Jewish communities across the empire. This was helped by energetic apostles, such as Paul and by the modern communications of the Roman Empire.

The flourishing of Christianity could not leave unaffected the empire. The emperors demanded veneration, and the fact that Christians worshiped Jesus only caused a lot of unrest. It could not accept that worshiped Christ whom they knew as a man, and not the emperor-god. So Christians expelled, used to house violently and used to house softer, until 313 AD where Constantine ended the persecutions of Christians and protected them by the Edict of Milan on religious tolerance<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> E. Artemi, "Emperor Constantine and the theology of Christianity from his autocracy to the second Ecumenical Council", in: Saint Emperor Constantine and the Christianity, Proceedings of International conference commemorating the 1700th Anniversary of the Edict Milan, 31/5/2013- 2/6/2013, in Nis 2013, (86-97), 87: "The Edict did not only protect Christians from religious persecution, but all religions, allowing anyone to worship whichever deity they chose. A similar edict had been issued in 311 by Galerius, then senior emperor of the Tetrarchy; Galerius' edict granted Christians the right to practice their religion without causing any troubles «Ut denuo sint Chrsitiani et conventicula sua componant, ita ut ne quid contra disciplinam agant» but did not restore any property to them". Eusebius of Caesarea, *Ecclesiastical History*, 10, 5.4.1- 10, 5.14.6, PG 20, 880D-885A: "When I, Constantine Augustus, and I, Licinius Augustus, came under favorable auspices to Milan and took under consideration everything which pertained to the common good and prosperity, we resolved among other things, or rather first of all, to make such decrees as seemed in many respects for the benefit of every one; namely, such as should preserve reverence and piety toward the deity. We resolved, that is, to grant both to the Christians and to all men freedom to follow the religion which they choose, that whatever heavenly divinity exists may be propitious to us and to all that live under our government.

5. We have, therefore, determined, with sound and upright purpose, that liberty is to be denied to no one, to choose and to follow the religious observances of the Christians, but that to each one freedom is to be given to devote his mind to that religion which he may think adapted to himself, in order that the Deity may exhibit to us in all things his accustomed care and favor.

6. It was fitting that we should write that this is our pleasure, that those conditions being entirely left out which were contained in our former letter concerning the Christians which was sent to your devotedness, everything that seemed very severe and foreign to our mildness may be annulled, and that now everyone who has the same desire to observe the religion of the Christians may do so without molestation.

Before the Edict of Milan in 313AD, Constantine's association with Christianity began with a fateful battle for control of the Western Roman Empire. Constantine faced Western Roman Emperor Maxentius at the Tiber River's Mulvian Bridge in A.D. 312<sup>2</sup>. Fourth-century historian and bishop Eusebius of Caesarea reported that before the great battle Constantine saw a flaming cross in the sky bearing the words "in this sign thou shalt conquer"<sup>3</sup>. Constantine did indeed conquer, routing and killing his enemy on a day that

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7. We have resolved to communicate this most fully to your care, in order that you may know that we have granted to these same Christians freedom and full liberty to observe their own religion.

8. Since this has been granted freely by us to them, your devotedness perceives that liberty is granted to others also who may wish to follow their own religious observances; it being clearly in accordance with the tranquility of our times, that each one should have the liberty of choosing and worshiping whatever deity he pleases. This has been done by us in order that we might not seem in any way to discriminate against any rank or religion.

9. And we decree still further in regard to the Christians, that their places, in which they were formerly accustomed to assemble, and concerning which in the former letter sent to your devotedness a different command was given, if it appear that any have bought them either from our treasury or from any other person, shall be restored to the said Christians, without demanding money or any other equivalent, with no delay or hesitation.

10. If any happen to have received the said places as a gift, they shall restore them as quickly as possible to these same Christians: with the understanding that if those who have bought these places, or those who have received them as a gift, demand anything from our bounty, they may go to the judge of the district, that provision may be made for them by our clemency. All these things are to be granted to the society of Christians by your care immediately and without any delay.

11. And since the said Christians are known to have possessed not only those places in which they were accustomed to assemble, but also other places, belonging not to individuals among them, but to the society as a whole, that is, to the society of Christians, you will command that all these, in virtue of the law which we have above stated, be restored, without any hesitation, to these same Christians; that is, to their society and congregation: the above-mentioned provision being of course observed, that those who restore them without price, as we have before said, may expect indemnification from our bounty.

12. In all these things, for the benefit of the aforesaid society of Christians, you are to use the utmost diligence, to the end that our command may be speedily fulfilled, and that in this also, by our clemency, provision may be made for the common and public tranquility.

13. For by this means, as we have said before, the divine favor toward us which we have already experienced in many matters will continue sure through all time.

14. And that the terms of this our gracious ordinance may be known to all, it is expected that this which we have written will be published everywhere by you and brought to the knowledge of all, in order that this gracious ordinance of ours may remain unknown to no-one".

<sup>2</sup> Lactantius, *Liber de Mortibus Persecutorum*, 48. Eusebius of Caesarea, *History Ecclesiastic*, 10, 5.4.1-7.A. A. Vasilief, *History of the Byzantine Empire, 324-1453*, vol. I, The University of Wisconsin Press, USA 1952, p. 52

<sup>3</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, *Life of Constantine*, 1, 28. T. D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1981, p. 30-31.

loomed large not only for the emperor but for the Christian faith<sup>4</sup>. Generally, from 312-320 AD Constantine showed tolerance of paganism, keeping pagan gods on coins and retaining his pagan high priest title “Pontifex Maximus” in order to maintain popularity with his subjects. This is because it should be taken into account that Constantine had certain responsibilities to uphold as a roman emperor, both political and religious. This means that Constantine had an obligation to carry out certain Pagan rites as long as he governed a Pagan nation. These obligations could not be removed unless Constantine changed the national religion, a move that politically would not of been brilliant during a time where the majority of romans were still pagan. So it is reasonable to suggest that Constantine carried out these pagan rites and erected these monuments because he had an obligation to, not because he wanted to. It is also then difficult to say that he was not a Christian because of his religious activities although his behavior at times does seem odd.

Since 320 Constantine was constantly supporting Christianity by financial aid and benefits or tax relief to Christian Church. After the recognition of Christianity as *religio licita*, Constantine the Great conferred the civil *audentia episcopalis* on the bishop. Thereby the bishop judged not only in virtue of his spiritual authority but also on the strength of imperial authority. Although Constantine protected Christianity, Licinius disagreed with Constantine's support of the Christian Church. He wanted to promote the Roman gods and the Christians were his biggest obstacle<sup>5</sup>. While Licinius and Constantine had a military truce, there was something like a religious cold war waging: Licinius persecuting Christians while Constantine supported them<sup>6</sup>.

In 324 AD the two Augusti, Constantine and Licinius, met in battle in Adrianoupolis Constantine defeated his co-emperor in the west, Licinius, leaving Constantine dominion over the east and the west to uproot paganism where tolerant Licinius had not<sup>7</sup>. After this battle in Chrysopolis and his win, Constantine argued that his religious policy remained unchanged and adopted Christianity as the official religion of the Byzantine state. He issued a declaration - law according to which he would first deal with the restoration of the Christian's personal rights and then with the rights of property<sup>8</sup>.

Generally, concerns of the state Constantine's opinion of the Christian church. He dreamed of a united church as part of his goal of a united empire.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, *Life of Constantine*, 1, 42.2.1 - 4.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 2.1.2 -9.

<sup>7</sup> J. Burckhardt, *The age of Constantine the Great*, Doubleday Anchor Books. New York 1949, p. 262-265.

<sup>8</sup> Hermias Sozomenos Philostorgius, *Ecclesiastical History*, II, 3, p. 51: «... God appeared to him (Constantine) by night, and commanded him to seek another spot. Led by hand of God, he arrived at Byzantium in Thrace, beyond Chalcedon in Bithynia, and here he was desired to build his city and to render it worthy of the name of Constantine. In obedience to the words of God, he therefore enlarged the city formerly called Byzantium... He named it New Rome and Constantinople, and constituted it the imperial capital for all...»

This dream was in real danger. Now Constantine had to face a more serious problem than the Donatism<sup>9</sup> schism about the unity of the Church. It was the Arian dispute that raged in many parts of the empire from 320s onwards. In order to face up the heresy of Arianism, Constantine, because of Hossius' influence, called together the bishops to the Council of Nicea in 325.

At last, the religious policy of Constantine the Great became crucial in the history of mankind. Neither did a Roman emperor enshrine the principle of religious liberty nor did he embrace Christianity, one of the many religions of the empire. It was important, mainly because his initiative was linked ultimately to the substitution of the theory that the universe was the centre of Greco-Roman antiquity with the teaching of Christianity, that the universe had as centre the God<sup>10</sup>. According to Christianity, the emperor is no longer God, but was intentional, the chosen of God, which governs only with divine grace and praised for.

## 2. The role of Hossius of Cordoba in the defence of Arianism

### 2.1. Arianism

In the 4<sup>th</sup> century after the end of the terrible persecutions, the first major doctrinal threat for the “official” Christian religion appeared. It was the teaching of Arius<sup>11</sup>. The problem that tormented Arius was the eternal birth of the Divine Word. Arius taught that only God the Father was eternal and too pure and infinite to appear on the earth. Therefore, God produced "in time" Christ the Son, out of nothing as the first and greatest creation<sup>12</sup>. The Son is

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<sup>9</sup> The Donatist controversy is among the most serious and remarkable schisms in the history of Christianity. It concerned a single issue, not even a doctrinal one, but rather, one more organizational than anything else. It resulted in two parallel Churches in northern Africa, a situation which endured for centuries. Donatism was the error taught by Donatus, bishop of Casae Nigrae, that the effectiveness of the sacraments depends on the moral character of the minister. In other words, if a minister who was involved in a serious enough sin were to baptize a person, that baptism would be considered invalid. Donatism developed as a result of the persecution of Christians ordered by Diocletian in 303 in which all churches and sacred Scriptures of the Christians were to be destroyed. In 304 another edict was issued ordering the burning of incense to the idol gods of the Roman Empire. Of course, Christians refused, but it did not curtail the increased persecution. Many Christians gave up the sacred texts to the persecutors and even betrayed other Christians to the Romans. These people became known as “lapsed” Christians who betrayed their faith. cf. St. Papadopoulos, *Patrologia*, II, Athens 1990, p. 33, 83, 180-182, 469, 685-689.

<sup>10</sup> VI. I. Feidas, *Ecclesiastic History* I, Athens 1992, p. 320.

<sup>11</sup> Arius was influenced constantly by Jewish monotheism, the philosophical concept of absolute transcendence and Immovable God, by cosmological dualistic perception and above all by the teaching of Philo on the created Word, by which God created the world. cf. St. Papadopoulos, *Patrologia*, II, Athens 1990, p. 114.

<sup>12</sup> Athanasius of Alexandria, *Contra Arianos*, 1, 1, M. Tetz, Athanasius Werke, vol. 1, I, publ. De Gruyter, Berlin 1940, p. 114<sup>14-23</sup> - 118<sup>10-55</sup> (=PG 26, 21B, 24A)

then the one who created the universe<sup>13</sup>. For this reason it could be characterized unborn or part unborn. He was therefore a simple creature of God. Because the Son relationship of the Son to the Father is not one of nature, it is, therefore, adoptive. God adopted Christ as the Son. Though Christ was a creation and because of His great position and authority, He was to be worshipped and even looked upon as God. For this reason, Arius taught that the Son was not by nature and essentially true God<sup>14</sup> [4]. As a building, then, the Son and the Word of God is not “synanarchos” and “synaidios” (coeternal) to the Father<sup>15</sup>, but immediately was created by the will of the Father<sup>16</sup>, while the other buildings were created by God through His Son. Typical phrase that summarized the Arian teaching about the Son was "was ever when he was not"<sup>17</sup>.

The co-creation of the world by God and the Son does not mean that the latter participated in the nature, in the essence of God or but Logos was not true God<sup>18</sup>. Arius advocated the absolute monarchy of divinity and accepted a God unborn and anarchic. Therefore, before the creation of the Son was an absolute "monarchy" of the only unborn and anarchic God, which explains why the true God was not the Father before he created the Son, and Son did not exist before the creation of the Father<sup>19</sup>.

The foundation of his teaching on the inferiority of the Son in relation to the Father was based on the widespread perception of subordination. The latter was the main basis of his falsehoods. It is marked that Arius used the theological concepts of authorship and sonship metaphorically analogically with human

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<sup>13</sup> Athanasius of Alexandria, *Contra Arianos*, 1, 5', 4, M. Tetz, Athanasius Werke, vol. 1, I, publ. De Gruyter, Berlin 1940, p. 114<sup>15-18</sup> (=PG 26, 21AB): «Ἦν γάρ», φησί, «μόνος ὁ Θεός, καὶ οὐπὼ ἦν ὁ Λόγος καὶ ἡ σοφία. Εἶτα θελήσας ἡμᾶς δημιουργῆσαι, τότε δὴ πεποίηκεν ἕνα τινά, καὶ ὠνόμασεν αὐτὸν Λόγον, καὶ Σοφίαν καὶ Υἱὸν, ἵνα ἡμᾶς δι' αὐτοῦ δημιουργήσῃ».

<sup>14</sup> Athanasius of Alexandria, *De decretis Nicaenae synodi*, 26, 1-5 καὶ 28, 1-2, H.G. Opitz, *De decretis Nicaenae synodi*, Athanasius Werke, vol. 2, I, publ. De Gruyter, Berlin 1940, σ. 38, (=PG 25, 461D-464A, 468AB): «Ὅτι δὲ οὐ ποίημα οὐδὲ κτίσμα ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ λόγος, ἀλλὰ ἴδιον τῆς τοῦ πατρὸς οὐσίας γέννημα ἀδιαίρετόν ἐστιν» καὶ «Ἀμέλει τῶν λεξειδίων αὐτῶν δειχθέντων τότε φαύλων καὶ αἰεὶ δὲ εὐελέγκτων ὄντων ὡς ἀσεβῶν ἐχρήσαντο παρ' Ἑλλήνων λοιπὸν τὴν λέξιν τοῦ ἀγενήτου, ἵνα προφάσει καὶ τούτου τοῦ ὀνόματος ἐν τοῖς γενητοῖς πάλιν καὶ τοῖς κτίσμασι συναριθμῶσι τὸν τοῦ θεοῦ λόγον, δι' οὗ αὐτὰ τὰ γενητὰ γέγονεν οὕτως εἰσὶ πρὸς ἀσέβειαν ἀναίσχυντοι καὶ πρὸς τὰς τοῦ κυρίου βλασφημίας φιλόνοικοι».

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Athanasius of Alexandria, *De synodis Arimini in Italia et Seleucia in Isauria*, 15, 3, H.G. Opitz, Athanasius Werke, τ. 2, VII, σ, 242<sup>16-18</sup> (=PG 26, 708A).

<sup>17</sup> Athanasius of Alexandria, *Contra Arianos*, 1, 1, M. Tetz, Athanasius Werke, vol. 1, I, publ. De Gruyter, Berlin 1940, p. 114<sup>14-23</sup> (=PG 26, 21B, 24A)

<sup>18</sup> Athanasius of Alexandria, *Contra Arianos*, 1, 5, and 1, 6, M. Tetz, Athanasius Werke, vol. 1, I, p. 114<sup>15-23</sup>, 135<sup>1-4</sup> (=PG 26, 21B, 65A).

<sup>19</sup> Athanasius of Alexandria, *De synodis Arimini in Italia et Seleucia in Isauria*, 15, 3, H.G. Opitz, *De synodis Arimini in Italia et Seleucia in Isauria*, Athanasius Werke vol. 2.1, 15.321-22 (=PG 26, 688B).

life, in which the father predates his son. He attempted, therefore, to explain the basis of human relations relationships Persons of the Holy Trinity.

Arius and his followers used strictly the historical- factual, 'literal', reading of Scripture method of interpretation of the Antiochian School to document the absolute monarchy of God - the Father, the created nature of the Son - the Word and the creation of the Father, the imperfect knowledge of the Father and moral glorification of the Son. The heretical teachings of Arius was undertaken to refute the Patriarch Alexander of Alexandria with the help of Athanasius the Great. In fact Athanasius the Great was the only theological opponent of Arius, but he managed to admonish the latter.

For political reasons, however, unity and harmony were necessary; and in 325 the Emperor convened the first Ecumenical Council at Nicaea to settle the Arian controversy. Constantine couldn't understand the doctrinal differences, so he tried to appease the theological opponents. Constantine could not penetrate into the deeper meaning of the «birth of the Son». For this reason, he urged Arius and Alexander to coexist peacefully despite their different teachings about the Triune God. The great theological danger was exposed to the risk Emperor by Hossius, bishop of Cordoba. Hossius appealed Constantine to convene a Council, in order to resolve this theological conflict. Constantine believed that the condemnation of Arianism would bring the desired peace within the empire, so he wrote to the bishops «the devil will no longer have any power against us, since all that which he had malignantly devised for our destruction has been entirely overthrown from the foundations. The splendor of truth has dissipated at the command of God those dissensions, schisms, tumults and so to speak, deadly poisons of discord. Wherefore we all worship one true God, and believe that he is. But in order that this might be done, by divine admonition I assembled at the city of Nicaea most of the bishops; with whom I myself also, who am but one of you, and who rejoice exceedingly in being your fellow-servant, undertook the investigation of the truth»<sup>20</sup>.

The evolution of things, however, denied the hopes of Constantine and the condemnation of Arianism was unable to give a definitive end to the theological disputes that had erupted within the Christian Church and by extension within the Empire. In the First Ecumenical Council, Arianism was condemned. The Council formulated a creed which, although it was revised at the Council of Constantinople in 381-382, has become known as the Nicene Creed. The Creed rejected Arius' doctrine that the Son is not true God but a creature, that He was not begotten of the substance of the Father but was made from nothing, that He was not eternal but rather that 'there was a time when He did not exist'<sup>21</sup>. What was affirmed, it was a belief in one God, the Father

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<sup>20</sup> Socrates Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastic History*, I, 9.

<sup>21</sup> E. Artemi, «Arius' heresy and the First Ecumenical Council», *Antiairetikon Egolpion* (2009) [http://egolpion.com/airesh\\_areiou.el.aspx](http://egolpion.com/airesh_areiou.el.aspx). E. Artemi, "Emperor Constantine and the theology of Christianity from his autocracy to the second Ecumenical Council", in: Saint Emperor Constantine and the Christianity, Proceedings of International conference

almighty, creator of all things; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom all things were made and who is the Son of God, the only-begotten of the Father, born of the substance of the Father. True God from true God, begotten not created, consubstantial with the Father and in the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is merely mentioned together with the Son and the Father, to indicate belief in the Triad of Father and Son and Holy Spirit, but He is given no further attention. All the conciliar stress was on the Son, His status, and His relation to the Father. Somewhat surprisingly the Council still used the words *ousia* and *hypostasis* as synonyms. Several points stand out. The Council Fathers did not use the term Logos for Christ but the more evangelical word Son. So the Creed affirmed the *homoousion* and the doctrine of consubstantiality.

A major role at the council was played by Athanasius, Bishop Alexander's deacon, secretary, and, ultimately, successor. Arius was condemned, but Arianism would cause trouble to the empire for many years after the Council. A few years later, Constantine changed his attitude to Arius and his teaching, which was the cause for his conflict with Athanasius<sup>22</sup>.

## 2.2. Hossius de Cordoba and his influence to Great Constantine

Osio, or Hossius, was born in Cordoba of Spain in 256 and died in 359 in Cordoba. He was a man with great education, of the highest morality, and widely respected as an outstanding leader of the western church<sup>23</sup>. In early life he became a confessor of the Faith in the persecution of Maximian or of Diocletian. In 294-295, he became Bishop of Cordova in Southern Spain<sup>24</sup>. His name was mentioned among the nineteen bishops from all parts of the Peninsula, presented at the provincial Council of Elvira (c. 300)<sup>25</sup>. This council approved its serious canons concerning such points of discipline as the treatment of those who had abjured (lapsed)<sup>26</sup> their faith during the recent persecutions and questions concerning clerical marriage<sup>27</sup>. It is supported that Hossius influenced the making of canons<sup>28</sup>.

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commemorating the 1700th Anniversary of the Edict Milan, 31/5/2013- 2/6/2013, in Nis 2013, (86-97), 95.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ch. Odahl, "God and Constantine: Divine Sanction for Imperial Rule in the First Christian Emperor's Early Letters and Art", *The Catholic Historical Review* 81 (1995) 333.

<sup>24</sup> V.C. De Clercq, *Hossius of Cordova: A Contribution to the History of the Constantinian Period*, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington, D.C. 1954, p. 79.

<sup>25</sup> The date of the council is also not certain. Scholars have placed it between 300 and 309. cf. K. J. von Hefele, trans. H. Leclercq, *Histoire des conciles d'apres les documents originaux*, tome 1, part. 1, Letouzey etané éditeurs, Paris 1907, p. 212-265.

<sup>26</sup> The Lapsed were forbidden the holy communion even in articulo mortis (canon. 1).

<sup>27</sup> K. J. von Hefele, trans. H. Leclercq, *Histoire des conciles d'apres les documents originaux*, tome 1, part. 1, Letouzey etané éditeurs, Paris 1907, p. 212-265.

<sup>28</sup> V.C. De Clercq, *Hossius of Cordova: A Contribution to the History of the Constantinian Period*, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington, D.C. 1954, p. 117.



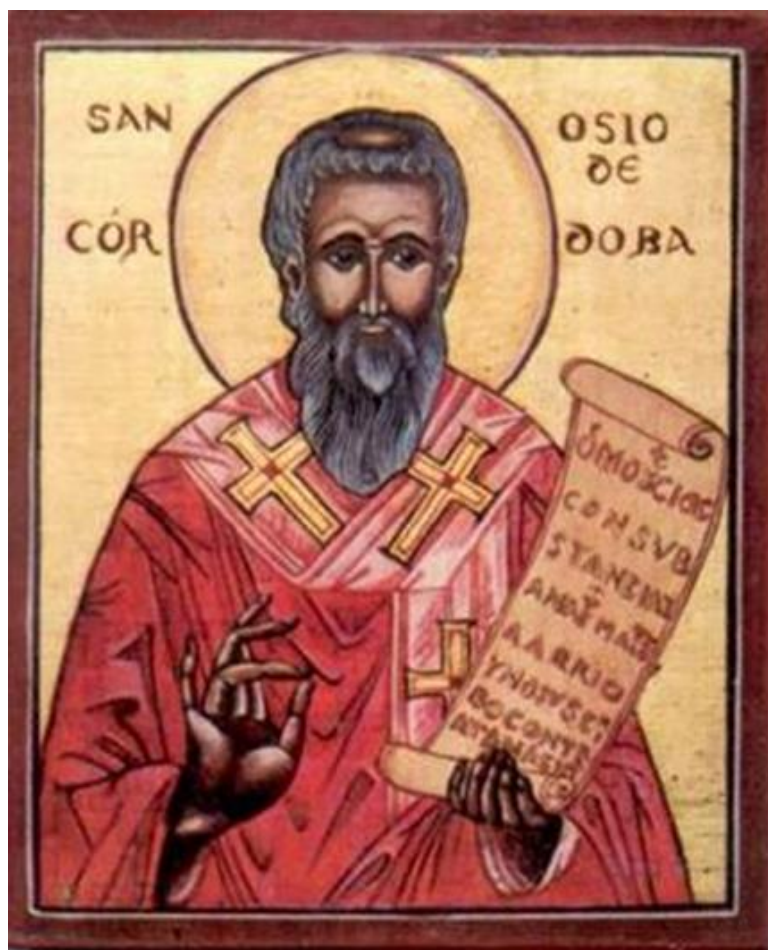


Fig. 1. ST. Ossius of Corduba, Byzantine icon. Image taken from Wikipedia.

He was a figure of great universal significance. He was highly appreciated by the Roman Emperor Constantine, and soon started work as his personal advisor regular companion for more than a decade<sup>29</sup>. A testimony for Hossius as counselor of Great Constantine was the letter of Constantine which was sent to the Catholic bishop of Carthage and primate of the entire African Church, Caecilian. It was written in this letter: “Do thou therefore, when thou hast received the above sum of money, command that it be distributed among all those mentioned above, according to the brief sent to thee by Hossius”<sup>30</sup>. He

<sup>29</sup> Ch. Odahl, “God and Constantine: Divine Sanction for Imperial Rule in the First Christian Emperor’s Early Letters and Art”, *The Catholic Historical Review* 81 (1995) 333

<sup>30</sup> Ph. Schaff and H. Wace, *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian*

*Church*, Vol. 1, W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan 1866, p. 382. Eusebius of Caesarea, *Ecclesiastical History*, 10, 6 PG 20, 892AB: «Κωνσταντῖνος Αὐγουστος Καικιλιανῶ ἐπίσκοπῳ Χαρταγένῃς. ἐπειδήπερ ἤρρεσεν κατὰ πάσας ἐπαρχίας, τὰς τε Ἀφρικὰς καὶ τὰς Νουμιδίας καὶ τὰς Μαυριτανίας, ῥητοῖς τισι τῶν ὑπηρετῶν τῆς ἐνθέσμου καὶ ἀγιωτάτης καθολικῆς θρησκείας εἰς ἀναλώματα ἐπιχορηγηθῆναι τι, ἔδωκα γράμματα πρὸς Οὐρσον τὸν διασημότατον καθολικὸν τῆς Ἀφρικῆς καὶ ἐδήλωσα αὐτῷ ὅπως τρισχιλίους φόλλεις τῇ σῇ στερρότητι ἀπαριθμῆσαι φροντίσῃ. σὺ τοίνυν, ἡνίκα τὴν προδηλουμένην ποσότητα τῶν χρημάτων ὑποδεχθῆναι ποιήσεις, ἅπασιν τοῖς προειρημένους

was a trusted consulter of Great Constantine who had asked him to compile a report on the growing of Arian controversy. After a quick trip in Alexandria, Hossius described with black and white colors the situation with the arian teaching. At the same time, Hossius convoked two synods at Alexandria of Egyptian bishops in 320 and 324 another at Antioch of Syrian bishops in early of 325, at all of which Arius and his followers were condemned.

According the historical sources, Hossius de Cordoba had been honored by Constantine I. The historian Sozomenos referred that Constantine chose Hossius to be sent in Egypt, in order to find the solution in the Arian Controversy: "The emperor zealously endeavored to remove both these causes of dissension from the church; and thinking to be able to remove the evil before it advanced to greater proportions, he sent one who was honored for his faith, his virtuous life, and most approved in those former times for his confessions about this doctrine, to reconcile those who were divided on account of doctrine in Egypt, and those who in the East differed about the Passover. This man was Hossius, bishop of Cordoba"<sup>31</sup>.

The other historian Socrates Scholasticus underlines that: "When the emperor was made acquainted with these disorders, he was very deeply grieved; and regarding the matter as a personal misfortune, immediately exerted himself to extinguish the conflagration which had been kindled, and sent a letter to Alexander and Arius by a trustworthy person named Hosius, who was bishop of Cordova, in Spain. The emperor greatly loved this man and held him in the highest estimation"<sup>32</sup>.

After Constantine's personal envoy, Hossius of Cordova, failed to effect reconciliation in 322 between the two parties in Alexandria, the emperor decided to convene an ecumenical council. The saint understood how severe was the teaching of Arius for the Church and for the salvation of human beings through Christ. For this reason he advised Saint Constantine to convene the First Ecumenical Council at Nicea in 325, where Hossius was influential in securing the inclusion in the Nicene Creed of the key word *homoousios*<sup>33</sup>. According to St. Papadopoulos, the opinion that Hossius was responsible for the adoption of the term *homoousios* is wrong. It is not based on historical sources<sup>34</sup>.

He was the first to sign the acts of this Council. He took part in the Ecumenical Council of Nicea in 325. Many historians supported that he was president of this Synod, but it is not known who really the president of the Council was. The most accepted opinion for the presidency of the Ecumenical

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κατὰ τὸ βρέουιον τὸ πρὸς σὲ παρὰ Ὁσίου ἀποσταλὲν ταῦτα τὰ χρήματα διαδοθῆναι κέλευσον».

<sup>31</sup> Sozomenos Hermeias, *Ecclesiastical History*, 1, 16, PG 67, 909-912.

<sup>32</sup> Socrates Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History*, 1, 7, PG 67, 42AB.

<sup>33</sup> T. Toom, *Classical Trinitarian Theology. A textbook*, T & T Clark, New York – London 2007, p. 93.

<sup>34</sup> St. Papadopoulos, *Patrologia II*, Athens 1990, p. 192.

Council is Eustathius Archbishop of Antiocheia<sup>35</sup>. He returned to his bishopric in Spain after the Ecumenical Council of Nicea and the celebration of the twenty years of reign of Constantine (vicennalia) in Rome in 326<sup>36</sup>.



Fig. 2. The First Ecumenical Council of Nicea. Byzantine icon. Image taken from Wikipedia

After the death of Constantine 1<sup>st</sup>, Hossius of Cordova and other bishops desired peace and a final judgment in the case of Athanasius of Alexandria and

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<sup>35</sup> “Then forthwith rose first the great Eustathius, bishop of Antioch, who, upon the translation of Philogonius, already referred to, to a better life, had been compelled reluctantly to become his successor by the unanimous suffrages of the bishops, priests, and of the Christ-loving laity”, Theodoretus of Cyrou, *Ecclesiastical History*, 1,6, PG 82, 917D. cf. VI. I. Feidas, *The Presidence (Chair) of the First Ecumenical Council*, Athens 1974. E. Dondoulakis, *Saint Eustathius of Antiocheia, the Confessor*, (in greek), doctoral thesis, Aristotelian University of Thessaloniki, Thessaloniki 2006, p. 76.

<sup>36</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea supported that the Vicennalia was celebrated after the end of the Council of Nicea. It is supported by other historians that Constantine celebrated his Vicennalia in Nicomedia in 325 and in Rome in 326. N. Lenski, (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Constantine*, New York 2012, p. 403.

other bishops alternately condemned and vindicated by councils in the East and the West. They also desired to definitively settle the confusion arising from the many doctrinal formulas in circulation, and suggested that all such matters should be referred to a general council. In order to make the council thoroughly representative, Sardica in Dacia Inferior was chosen as the meeting place.

After a period of quiet life in his own diocese, Hossius presided in 343 at the Council of Sardica<sup>37</sup>. According to the Council of Sardica, today is Sophia of Bulgaria, this Synod could rightly be considered a disastrous encounter between East and West. Rather than resolve any differences, the meeting only accentuated the disagreements between the two parties and created further tensions, between Orthodox and Arians, West and East. At the opening session, the West insisted that certain bishops who had previously been deposed by eastern councils, especially Athanasius, Marcellus, and Asclepas of Gaza be allowed to take part in the deliberations. The eastern bishops objected and finally abandoned Sardica and departed to Philippopolis. There they affirmed their decisions from the Council of Antioch in 341 and published their own encyclical letter stating as much. Meanwhile, the western bishops reaffirmed the decisions of the Council of Rome in 341 and declared Athanasius, Marcellus, etc. to be orthodox. They likewise published their own canons, letters, and depositions<sup>38</sup>.

At the Council of Sardica and afterwards he spoke and wrote in favour of Athanasius of Alexandria, who was a principal opponent of Arianism. He reacted keenly against the emperor Constantius II (337-361), an advocate of the Arian heresy for the condemnation of Athanasius. In 356, Hossius wrote to Emperor Constantius II and ordered emperor not to have any relation with the things of the Church, but without success<sup>39</sup>. It was a period that the arian crisis

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<sup>37</sup> Socrates Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History* 2.20- 2.22, PG 67, 233-247. Sozomen Hermeias, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.11.3-3.12.7, PG 67, 1060-1064. Theodoret of Cyrus, *Ecclesiastical History* 2.7-2.8, PG 82, 1017-1021. Athanasius of Alexandria, *Apologia Secunda or Apologia contra Arianos* 37-50, PG 25, 311A-341A. Athanasius of Alexandria, *Historia Arianorum*, 15.3- 18.3, PG 25, 789A-713A. Athanasius of Alexandria, *De Synodis Arimini in Italia et Seleucia in Isauria*, 25, PG 26, 725A-727A.

<sup>38</sup> Athanasius of Alexandria, *Apologia Secunda or Apologia contra Arianos, B*, 21-35 PG 25, 281A-308C.

<sup>39</sup> Hossius of Cordoba, *Letter to Constantius II*, quoted by Athanasius, *History of Arians*, 44, 6-8, PG 25, 744C-745AB. T. D. Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius: Theology and Politics in the Constantine Empire*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1993, p. 175: "Stop, I beg you, and remember that you are a mortal man: fear the day of judgement and keep yourself pure for it. Do not intrude yourself into the affairs of the church, and do not give us advice about these matters but rather receive instruction on them from us. God has given you kingship, but has entrusted us with what belongs to the church. Just as man the man who tries to steal your position as emperor contradicts God who has placed you there, so too you should be afraid of becoming guilty of great offence by putting the affairs of the church under your control. It is written: Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God those that are God's" (Matthew 22, 21). Hence neither do we bishops have the right to rule over the world nor do you, Emperor, have the right to officiate in Church".

was on its peak. Because of his attitude, he was to prison in Sirmium<sup>40</sup>, western of Belgrade

From 353 to 356 Hossius strongly resisted the efforts of the Arian emperor Constantius II to have Athanasius condemned by the Western bishops and in a famous letter reproved Constantius for intruding into ecclesiastical matters. Around 357 however, Hossius started to find himself facing pressure from the Arians following the banishment of Pope Liberius<sup>41</sup>. The Emperor Constantius summoned the bishop to the council of Sirmium (357) and he was coerced into subscribing to the Anomoean creed<sup>42</sup>. After being subjected to threats and physical violence, the old man Hossius, who was near his hundredth year, signed the Arian formula of Sirmium (357)<sup>43</sup>, and only then was he permitted to return to his diocese in Cordoba, but he retracted his signature before he died.

When he finally agreed, this sparked negative reactions in the West, such as from Hilary, Phoebadius and the Luciferians. In defense of the bishop, Hossius's torture was the cause that he succumbed to the pressures under which he had been placed. He was held in saintly veneration by the Greek Orthodox Church. In the small Cordoban square Plaza de las Capuchinas stands a statue in honour of this Cordoban bishop.

Despite his long career, few of Hossius' writings are known. Two works attributed to him by Isidore of Seville, *De laude virginitatis* and *De interpretatione vestium sacerdotalium*, are no longer extant. His works are: 1)

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<sup>40</sup> Hilarius Poitiers, *De Synodis 11*, PL 10, 487-489.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid: "Quod vero quosdam aut multos movebat, de substantia, quae Grsece Usia appellatur, id est, (ut expressius intelligatur) homousion, aut quod dicitur homoeusion: nullam omnino fieri oportere mentionem nec quemquam praedicare, ea de causa et ratione, quod nec in divinis Scripturis contineatur: et quod super hominis scientiam sit, nec quisquam possit nativitatem Filii enarrare, de quo scriptum est: «Generationem ejus quis enarrabit?». Scire autem manifestum est solum Patrem quomodo genuerit Filium suum; et Filium quomodo genitus sit a Patre. Nulla ambiguitas est majorem esse Patrem. Nulli potest dubium esse Patrem, honore, dignitate, claritate, majestate et ipso nomine Patris majorem esse Filio, ipso testante, «Qui me misit Pater, major me est». Et hoc Catholicum esse, nemo ignorat, duas personas esse Patris et Filii. Majorem Patrem, Filium subjectum, cum omnibus his quae ipsi Pater subjecit. Patrem initium non habere, invisibilem esse, immortalem esse, impassibilem esse: Filium autem natum esse ex Patre, Deum ex Deo, lumen ex lumine. Cujus Filii generationem, ut ante dictum est, neminem scire, nisi Patrem suum. Ipsum autem Filium Dei, Dominum et Deum nostrum, sicuti legitur, carnem vel corpus, id est, hominem suscepisse ex utero Virginitatis Mariae, sicut Angelus praedicavit. Ut autem Scripturae omnes docent, et praecipue ipse magister Gentium Apostolus, hominem suscepisse de Maria Virgine, per quem compassus est. Illa autem clausula est totius lidei, et illa confirmatio quod Trinitas semper servanda est, sicut legimus in Evangelio: «Ite et baptizate omnes gentes in nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus sancti» Integer, perfectus numerus Trinitatis est, Paracletus autem Spiritus per Filium est: qui missus venit juxta promissum, ut Apostolos et omnes credentes instrueret, doceret, sanctificaret".

Osii sententiae sive Canones Patrum qui Serdicae convenerant<sup>44</sup>. 2) Epistula ad Iulium papam<sup>45</sup>. 3) Epistle to Constantius<sup>46</sup>

### 3. Conclusions

Constantine's adherence to Christianity was closely associated with his rise to power. He fought the Battle of the Milvian Bridge in the name of the Christian God, having received instructions in a dream to paint the Christian monogram on his troops' shields. A year later he signed with Licinius the Edict of Milan, which extended toleration to the Christians and restored any personal and corporate property that had been confiscated during the persecution.

In 324, Constantine I, became the only one emperor in Roman Empire. That period, Arian controversy appeared. The teaching of Arianism was well documented. The central controlling idea is the unique, incommunicable, indivisible, transcendent nature of the singular divine being. This was what the Arians referred to as the Father. The Son was a *ktisma* or *poiema*, a creature. Being begotten or made, he must have had a beginning, and this led to the famous Arian phrase, "there was when he was not." Since he was not generated out of the Father's being and he was, as they accorded him, the first of God's creation, then he must have been created out of nothing.

Constantine asked the help of Hossius of Cordoba. The latter didn't manage to reconcile the arians with orthodoxs. He determined to end the troublesome conflict decisively. The result was to convene the First Ecumenical Council at Nicea in 325. There, the Arianism was condemned.

Hossius of Cordoba the Confessor was bishop for more than sixty years in the city of Cordova (Spain) during the fourth century. Although he took part in many synods condemned arianism and defended Great Athanasius. In 357, in Council of Sirmiou, Hossius obliged to accept the arian canon, after the pressure of the emperor Constantius II. It is undoubtful that he regretted that, for this reason, the Orthodox Church honors him as saint.

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<sup>44</sup> PL 8, 1317-1328. Hossius was responsible for the most of canons of Sardica.

<sup>45</sup> PL 8, 919-926. Hossius wrote this epistle with Protogenes of Sardica, in order to inform the bishop of Rome about the Council of Sardica in 343.

<sup>46</sup> Athanasius, *History of Arians*, 44, 6-8, PG 25, 744C-745AB.

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