

Izvirni znanstveni članek (1.01)
 Bogoslovni vestnik 77 (2017) 1,97—108
 UDK: 27-732.3“325“
 Besedilo prejeto: 2/2017; sprejeto: 5/2017

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Possible Influence of Hosius of Cordoba on Decisions Made at the First Ecumenical Council (325): Analogy of Canons from the Councils of Elvira, Arles and Nicaea

Abstract: This study deals with canons from the councils of Elvira and Arles in the context of the canons of the First Ecumenical Council (325), in order to identify a common denominator that could unify the theological-canonical tradition from these three councils. An analogy of the canons ratified at the Councils of Elvira, Arles and Nicaea, offers Hosius of Cordoba as a possible common denominator. Bishop Hosius of Cordoba was an advisor to Emperor Constantine the Great and probably one of the authors of Emperor Constantine the Great's ecclesiastical policy. Thus, his activity may also be seen as the unification of traditions from Spain, the Western Roman Empire – through Arles and Rome, all the way to the East – Nicaea and other Eastern dioceses whose representatives attended the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea.

Key words: canons, Tradition, First ecumenical council, Constantine the Great, *pax Romana*

Povzetek: **Možni vpliv Hosija iz Cordobe na sprejete odločitve prvega ekumenskega koncila (325): Analogija kanonov sprejetih na concilijih v Elviri, Arlesu in Niceji**

Pričujoča študija se v kontekstu kanonov prvega ekumenskega koncila (325) posveča kanonom concilijev v Elviri in Arlesu, da bi bilo tako mogoče najti skupni imenovalac, ki bi združil teološko-kanonsko izročilo omenjenih treh concilijev. Po analogiji kanonov, sprejetih na concilijih v Elviri, Arlesu in Niceji, se kot možni skupni imenovalac kaže Hosij iz Cordobe. Ta škof je bil svetovalec cesarja Konstantina Velikega in verjetno tudi eden izmed tvorcev njegove cerkvene politike. Od tod se Hosijeva dejavnost lahko razkriva tudi v luči združevanja izročil iz Španije oziroma zahodnega rimskega cesarstva – preko Arlesa in Rima, vse do Vzhoda –, Niceje in drugih vzhodnih diecez, katerih predstavniki so se udeležili prvega ekumenskega koncila v Niceji.

Ključne besede: kanoni, izročilo, prvi ekumenski concilij, Konstantin Veliki, *pax Romana*

1. Introduction

Because the Tradition in Christian Church is a collection of traditions of practices associated with local Christian communities, the main idea of the article is the connection between local and Ecumenical councils and decisions made by persons that attended at the councils. Christian beliefs and canons have more or less authority according to the nature of the practices and to the issues in question. The problems in local communities are resolved in the canons of the councils and could impact the local communities and, also, the whole Church. Many Churches from the East and West have traditional practices, such as particular patterns of worship or rites that developed over time. In the local councils particular tradition might be developed and the persons that developed it impact the future decisions on some future Ecumenical councils. Similarly, deviations from such patterns are sometimes considered unacceptable or heretical and also had been reconsidered at local and, after that, Ecumenical councils. The aim of this article is to connect councils from the Christian West from the early 4th century with First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea. But, except the canons, in the article it is considered a person as a common denominator who had connected the councils – local and Ecumenical.

Constantine the Great's participation in the life of the Church began immediately after the Edict of Milan (313). Before the First Ecumenical Council (325), councils in the East were held at Ancyra in 314 and in Neocaesarea in 315, and in the West at Elvira (306), Rome (313) and Arles (314) – and Constantine directly or indirectly participated in many of them. Inductive reasoning in the article is reasoning in which the premises are viewed as supplying strong evidence for the truth of the conclusion. The premises are based on the analogy of canons from the Councils of Elvira and Arles with canons from the Council of Nicaea and on the possibility that analogy of canons, brought at the mentioned councils, could offer Bishop Hosius of Cordoba as a possible common denominator. While the conclusion of a deductive argument is certain, the truth of the conclusion of an inductive argument in the article is probable, based upon the evidence given. According to that, the article will be about possible influence of Hosius of Cordoba on decisions and canons made at the First Ecumenical council because of analogy of the canons from the councils of Elvira and Arles, which will be discussed in the separate part of the article.

2. The main idea of the Councils before the First Ecumenical Council

Preparations for the First Ecumenical Council were long, both in the East and in the West, and in accordance with idea of *pax Romana*. Realistic prospects for the convocation of such a council appeared after the problem with Donatism (313/314) and as a result of Constantine's participation in the life of the Church. The Edict of Milan eased the life of Christians, enabling them – now in peace – to attempt to shape and write down the theological-canonical tradition preserved in the

Church during the first three centuries. Emperor Constantine wanted peace (*pax Romana*) within the Church to contribute to oneness of mind in the Empire. On the other hand, due to the nature of the Church, which is catholic and ecumenical, bishops and metropolitans had already set the stage for an ecumenical council through local councils, resolving the problems that they had encountered through the years in concrete communities.

Councils before Nicaea had been convened due to lack of discipline or schism, but those gathered a smaller number of participants and were of local character. On the other hand, there were councils that dealt with more serious problems and more burning issues, but did not have an ecumenical scope. A third aspect of these Church councils was the canons that were brought. These canons were obligatory for local Churches – although, in later periods, they could become so for the entire Church, or formed the base of canons adopted at later councils whose decisions were universally obligatory for the entire Church. Finally, the main idea of the local councils was to develop local traditions and to impact on the Tradition of the whole Church.

In the 4th century, before the First Ecumenical Council, Church hierarchs in the East convened councils at Ancyra and in Neocaesarea. However, councils in Elvira and Arles in the West preceded these. This paper will focus on the two mentioned councils as representative councils for the canonical codification that took place in the early 4th century in the West, and on the influence of the canons adopted at these councils on the canons of the First Ecumenical Council, under the obvious influence of a very important high hierarch, council participant and imperial court confidant – Hosius of Cordoba.

3. Council of Elvira

The Council of Elvira (Illiberis or Eliberis, probably present-day Granada) was held in 306.¹ Nineteen bishops and twenty-six priests attended, mostly from southern Spain, along with a number of deacons and laymen. Eighty-one canons were adopted at the council, dealing with Christians' positions regarding paganism and Judaism, immorality, disciplinary infractions within the Church, etc. (Sotomayor 1989) The Council of Elvira was held after the great persecutions perpetrated by Roman emperor Gaius Aurelius Valerius Diocletianus. It is known that these persecutions took the lives of about fifty Christians from Cordoba, Mérida and Zaragoza. (Lane Fox 1986, 596; Mackenna 1938, 36–37) In addition to these cities with Christian populations, there were many other Spanish Christian settlements, as is evident from the list of bishops present at the Council of Elvira (Ayán et al. 2013, 76–81).

¹ Karl Joseph von Hefele (Hefele and Leclercq 1965, 261–262; 176), Pius Bonifatius Gams (1864) and Alfred Dale (1882) are decisive in their dating of the Council of Elvira, mainly due to the fact that Hosius of Cordoba could not have attended the council after 307, when he became an adviser to Constantine. On the other hand, Joannes Dominicus Mansi offers 309 (1759). However, some date the council to the time before Diocletian's persecution (De Clercq 1954).

Eighty-one canons were adopted at the Council of Elvira called Acts of Elvira, accumulating all the years of the Church's experience in Spain, local traditions and customs due to pagans, Jews and moral violation – although this is just a hypothesis. Because of that, Miguel Lázaro Sánchez asks the following: Can we afford to go on considering the canons of Elvira as belonging to one and only one council? Contemporary French historiography has answered the question positively because of influence of the pioneer article of Maurice Meigne (1975). Since the end of the 20th century debate is on about the authentic character and the unity of the canons called canons of Elvira. Miguel Lázaro Sánchez (2008, 517) classifies the various theses about the Council of Elvira into two contradictory approaches: the first one supports the unity of the Acts as unique tradition; the other one, following the mentioned article of M. Meigne, stands up for the mixed character of the Acts which would be a collection of heterogeneous judicial provisions. Meigne's hypothesis was that twenty-one canons were adopted at this particular council, while the remaining sixty that were included in the council's proceedings were, in fact, canons adopted at earlier councils held on the Iberian Peninsula. (1975, 361–387) Finally, Meigne's hypothesis is in need of broader analysis, as the canons have not been yet systematized by topic, although there are indicators that this hypothesis is realistic. It is also necessary to analyze the language style of the canons in order to form a single conclusion regarding how many canons actually originated in Elvira in 306. Berdugo Villena concluded his research that there are the different linguistic styles in the different canons. (Sotomayor and Villena 2005, 106–108) So, debate about it will go on.

The Council of Elvira has provided later generations of researchers an insight into the Church's organization in Spain in 3rd and early 4th century, and the canons adopted at the council and their signatories represent an especially valuable contribution (Sotomayor 2001). In addition, the publishing of the canons has allowed insight into the way in which Christians viewed their position in Spain, both in the religious and in the social sense, especially in relation to the Jews and pagans around them.

3.1 A look at some of the canons adopted in Elvira in the context of canons from the First Ecumenical Council

The text of all the canons clearly expresses the theologically sound faith of the Christians in Spain and is indicative of all the anomalies that they faced during the 3rd century, when their position regarding various problems, codified at the Council of Elvira, was clearly defined.² This Spanish Christian view, articulated in the canons from Elvira, may also indicate a connection to the canons adopted at the First Ecumenical Council, primarily thanks to Hosius of Cordoba, who was one of

² The canons adopted at the Council of Elvira were reviewed by Ferdinand de Mendoza in 1593 (also published in Mansi 1759, 57–397); this was followed by Antonio Gonzalez in 1808, offering a new review of the canons with a translation into Spanish; the book was republished in 1849. Contemporary researchers primarily use the excerpt from Hefele (1965); also used is Gams (1864), as well as the book by Dale on the Council of Elvira, published in London in 1882. The Spanish text of the canons was published by Ayán et. al. (2013, 60–81). The best edition of the canons is in Martinez and Rodriguez (1966–1982).

the most decisive factors at both the councils. (De Clercq 1954, 26)

Firstly, we should emphasize that the total number of canons from the Council of Elvira has not been properly systematized by topic. Instead, the canons were somewhat randomly assembled and unified into the council document signed by bishops from nineteen Spanish dioceses. Thus, as will be concluded from the brief thematic overview below, the first forty canons were systematized into more-or-less integral wholes, while the remaining canons were added on as though transcribed from earlier Christian councils.

The view of Christians from Spain of the time regarding paganism and the offering of sacrifices is clear from the first canon, which bars any Christian, i.e. one who has been baptized and who has offered sacrifices in a pagan temple, from receiving Holy Communion – even on his deathbed. This is a traditional Church view, born out of the times of persecution during the first three centuries, and inherited by Christ's Church throughout the European continent, including Spain.

The eighteenth canon reveals the bishop-centric structure of the Church in Spain at the end of the 3rd and the beginning of the 4th century, by providing the Church hierarchy: bishop-presbyters-deacons. The canon also states that, should anyone from the said hierarchy have participated in a sexual violation, they should be barred from receiving Holy Communion even on their deathbed. The nineteenth canon also begins by listing the above-mentioned Church hierarchy, and then states that it is forbidden for the bishop-presbyters-deacons to leave the territory of their diocese or parish for the sake of affairs that bring them material profit. This injunction is also found in the second canon of the Council of Arles (314) as well as in the fifteenth and sixteenth canons of the First Ecumenical Council. The twentieth canon begins with the word clerics, assuming that the bishop-centric structure of the Church is now clear. Then the canon moves on to the subject of usury – that a cleric engaged in usury should be defrocked, and a layman excommunicated. This is also the subject of the seventeenth canon from the Council of Nicaea.

The twenty-seventh canon states that a bishop or other cleric is not to live with a woman with whom he does not have familial ties, i.e. that he is allowed to live only with his sister or a nun (as the canon states: virgin). This canon is related to the third canon of the Council of Nicaea: that no bishop, presbyter, deacon, or any one of the clergy whatever, is to have a subintroducta dwelling with him, other than a mother, or sister, or aunt. (Popović 2012, 107)

The forty-third canon is very important, as it condemns heresy and commands that everyone celebrate the Pentecost, while the twenty-first canon of the First Ecumenical Council states that prayer to God should be made while standing, as there were some that knelt on Sundays and during the days of the Pentecost, and the Council wanted all things to be uniformly observed everywhere (in every parish).

The seventy-sixth canon states that if it should be discovered that an ordained deacon has committed a mortal sin, and then confesses it himself, he should undergo a repentance period of three years before being able to receive Holy Communion; however, if he conceals his transgression and someone else discovers it

– five years must pass before he can receive Holy Communion. The seventy-seventh canon says that, should a deacon baptize someone in distress, in a situation where there is no bishop or presbyter present, a bishop should subsequently perfect such a baptism with his blessing; if the baptized person should die without this blessing, then their faith up to that time should be taken into account. The eighteenth canon of the First Ecumenical Council deals with deacons. It has come to the knowledge of the holy and great Synod that, in some districts and cities, the deacons administer the Eucharist to the presbyters, whereas neither canon nor custom permits that they who have no right to offer should give the Body of Christ to them that do offer. And this also has been made known, that certain deacons now touch the Eucharist even before the bishops. Let all such practices be utterly done away, and let the deacons remain within their own bounds, knowing that they are the ministers of the bishop and the inferiors of the presbyters. Let them receive the Eucharist according to their order, after the presbyters, and let either the bishop or the presbyter administer to them. Furthermore, let not the deacons sit among the presbyters, for that is contrary to canon and order. And if, after this decree, any one shall refuse to obey, let him be deposed from the diaconate.³

3.2 Uninterrupted canonical Tradition Elvira – Nicaea

The connection between the canons from the Council of Elvira and the Council of Nicaea is evident in the canons themselves and also in the Tradition: the twenty-seventh canon from the Council of Elvira and the third from the Council of Nicaea; the fifth canon of the Council of Nicaea speaks in the same tone regarding excommunicants as do several canons from the Council of Elvira (36–39; 44–47; 60–67); the ninth and the tenth canons from the Council of Nicaea deal with ordination, as do the eighteenth, nineteenth and thirty-second canons of the Council of Elvira; the thirteenth canon of the Council of Nicaea is a condensation of several canons from the Council of Elvira that treat baptism at the point of death (several canons from the eighth to the twentieth canon); the fourteenth canon from the Council of Nicaea is the same as the twenty-second from the Council of Elvira, with the canon from Elvira also prescribing a period of catechumenate; the fifteenth canon of the Council of Nicaea, which deals with clerics passing from city to city, is the same as the nineteenth canon from the Council of Elvira; the eighteenth canon from the Council of Nicaea is similar to the thirty-second canon from the Council of Elvira; the twentieth canon of the Council of Nicaea deals with the celebration of the Pentecost, as does the forty-third canon of the Council of Elvira.

3.3 The certain position of Hosius of Cordoba at the Council of Elvira

It should first be emphasized that Bishop Hosius of Cordoba was the second signatory of the canons from the Council of Elvira, after Felix of Aquitaine, which

³ On the canons of the First Ecumenical council: Milaš 1895; Jevtić 2005; Popović 2012, 107–111; Huillier 2000.

underlines his importance, both at the council and in the Church in Spain. He would subsequently become theological adviser⁴ to Emperor Constantine the Great, who convened the First Ecumenical Council. Since the documents from the council have not been preserved, there is only indirect knowledge that Hosius of Cordoba participated at the council, as well as in the preparation and final reception of the canons from the First Ecumenical Council in the Church as a whole. (Payne 1980, 79) The canons from the two councils can be linked in several instances, and we shall further elaborate on this, using analogy in the process of analyzing canons from the councils (Elvira, Arles, Nicaea). The hypothesis that will be proven through analogy of the canons from the councils is that this was the work of Hosius of Cordoba in his capacity as aide to the Emperor and someone who was acquainted with the ecclesiastical issues discussed at the councils of Elvira and Arles.

4. Council of Arles

Besides the Council of Elvira, with its above mentioned goal and argumentation for the canonical tradition of the ecumenical Church, it should be emphasized that the Donatist schism in North Africa sparked the councils of Rome and Arles, with the emperor appearing for the first time as arbiter in Christian disputes, only a year after the proclamation of the Edict of Milan (Čairović 2012). The Donatist schism during the time of Emperor Constantine, which is connected to an earlier dispute between Cyprian and Stephen, is quite significant for the history of the Christian Church during the time of the reign of Constantine the Great.

4.1 A look at some of the canons adopted at the Council of Arles in 314 in the context of the canons from the First Ecumenical Council

The canons from the Council of Arles have been preserved until today thanks to the *Letter to Sylvester* and the *Canons to Sylvester* – the former document giving evidence of the existence of 9 canons and the latter of all the 22 canons. The document with the canons from Arles was signed by all the clerics in attendance. According to Hefele, both the documents are authentic – the former containing a shorter and older excerpt from abridged canons, and the latter containing the full canons. (1965, 69) Twenty-two canons were adopted at the Council of Arles, of which only two (the 9th and the 14th canon) are directly and two more indirec-

⁴ One of the best studies of the relationship between Hosius of Cordoba and Constantine the Great is that of Victor Cyril De Clercq (1954). Constantine mentioned Hosius on several occasions, as testified by Church historians Eusebius and Socrates, but contemporary historians disagree regarding the claim that Hosius was an adviser to Constantine the Great (Duchesne 1907; De Clercq 1954, 148–152; Odahl 1995; MacMullen 1971, 105–107; 131; 170–178; Barnes 1981, 43; 51–55; 74; 215–216; 225–226; Frend 1985, 145–146; Jones 1982, 74–75; 87; 124–134). Brian Herbert Warmington (1989) also offers the thesis that Constantine did not retain Christian high hierarchs as advisers, which needs to be proven, as it is hardly sustainable viewed from a broader historical context. Our research is, nevertheless, based on the thesis that Hosius of Cordoba was a theological adviser to Constantine the Great.

tly (the 10th and the 15th canon) related to the Donatist schism, in addition to the repeating of the 75th canon of the Council of Elvira, which is indirectly related to Donatists (O'Donnell 1961, 31). The remaining eighteen canons represent, to a certain extent, an abridgment of Church tradition and an expression of this council's marked communicativeness both with the ecclesiastical heritage in the West from the end of the 3rd and the beginning of the 4th century and the canonical tradition of the East. Of the eighteen canons from the Council of Arles that are not related to the Donatist schism, eleven (4–6; 10–13; 15–17; 22) passed on the canonical tradition of the Council of Elvira, which might mean that the tradition from Spain was carried over to the territory of the Western Roman Empire, or that there was a prominent person involved that could influence the repeating of the tradition from the Council of Elvira in Arles, and several years later – with the Emperor himself confirming the tradition by repeating it at the council in which he personally participated and that he personally convened – at the First Ecumenical Council. That person, indirectly or directly, might have been Hosius, the bishop of Cordoba. The eleven canons from Arles encompassed fifteen canons from Elvira (9; 15–17; 20; 25; 39; 46; 53; 58; 62; 73–75; 77). Thus, in this period, which was very delicate for the entire Church – both in the East and in the West – it can be observed that the repetition of traditional canonical practice is a result of: knowledge of the tradition, which was passed on during the period of persecution by pilgrims, i.e., the holy fathers that came to the West fleeing the persecution; patristic literature; as well as of direct influence of council participants that authored the decisions.

The first canon of the Council of Arles dealt with the issue of the celebration of Pascha – that the Feast of feasts should be held everywhere according to the Roman custom,⁵ which was also discussed at the First Ecumenical Council.⁶

⁵ The text of the canon clearly testifies to the uneven celebration of Pascha in the Christian world at the beginning of the 4th century. For instance, at that time in Britain Pascha was celebrated according to the Roman custom and according to the old-Celtic custom, on the day of the Jewish Pesach. The Picts were under the influence of the Celtic (Irish) mission, as evidenced by the fact that the Pict king Nechtan (710) sent to Northumbria a detailed account of discussions regarding the then celebration of Pascha. (Barrell 2000, 6) We should add that bishops from Britain also attended the Council of Arles (Haddan and Stubbs 1969, 7).

⁶ The councils of Arles and Nicaea are linked in several ways: by the person that convened them, the small number of common participants – Church heads from the entire Empire – and the subjects that were discussed. The decisions from the Council of Arles indicate that Emperor Constantine's initial ambitions were much greater and far-reaching than the decisions produced by the councils turned out to be after the councils themselves and during the period of their reception. For the Church, the problem of determining the day of the celebration of the New Testament Pascha (Easter) was not new, as it had faced that issue in the earlier centuries as well. During the centuries of persecution, the difference in the way of calculating the day of the Pascha that existed between the Churches of Rome and Alexandria on the one hand, and the Churches of Asia Minor on the other, could not present a major problem that might affect Church unity, due to her quite marginal role in society at that time. Constantine sought to avoid the introduction of this topic, i.e. any difference in ecclesiastical practice that might give rise to divisions. Since the council was convened due to problems in the Church of Carthage which, despite its geographical proximity to Alexandria, tended to gravitate toward Rome, it can be supposed that Constantine expected that decisions on the part of a Western council, such as the Council of Arles, which would then be forwarded to other Churches with the stamp of the attending emperor's authority, would serve to accomplish the necessary unification of the celebration of Pascha in all the Churches belonging to territories under his rule, with an accent on the unification of the practices of the African and the European Churches. This is precisely where Hosius of

The second canon explicitly states that all ordained clerics should remain in the places of their ordination, rather than moving from diocese to diocese. The twenty-first canon applies the same demand upon presbyters and deacons. Both these canons are an expression of an early Church view. The same prohibition can be found in the apostolic canons, the 15th canon from the Council of Nicaea, but also in the 19th canon of the Council of Elvira, which states that each church (parish) in a given diocese has its own priest.

The sixth canon states that those who wish to be baptized in time of serious sickness can do so if they are bedridden, analogously to the 13th canon of the First Ecumenical Council, by which one who is dying cannot be denied administration of the last Holy Communion. On the other hand, in several places the Council of Elvira deals with denial of Holy Communion – even at the point of death.⁷

The fifteenth canon of the Council of Arles states that deacons should serve only in the church of their ordination. Subsequently – at the First Ecumenical Council – this canon was expanded and elaborated into the 15th canon, which bars not only deacons but also presbyters and bishops from moving from city to city. Again, this is a consequence of the persecutions of Diocletian, during whose time some deacons took it upon themselves to administer the holy sacraments in places where there were no priests or bishops. This canon from Arles prohibits the practice of deacons administering the holy sacraments in many places, limiting them to their own Church. The sixteenth canon states that those who have transgressed and have been excommunicated from their fellowship can be restored only to their own fellowship.⁸ The seventeenth canon deals with bishops who serve in another bishop's diocese.⁹ The eighteenth canon warns deacons in cities not to put themselves above the presbyters, or even do anything without the presbyter's knowledge. With its 15th canon, the First Ecumenical Council barred deacons from passing from city to city, which was – as we already said – a consequence of the new situation in the persecuted Church. And, since Church conditions stabilized by the time of the First Ecumenical Council, it was necessary to instruct clerics how to relate to traditional practice in times of peace. According to the 18th canon of the First Ecumenical Council, deacons are even barred from sitting among the presbyters.

The nineteenth canon states that bishops that are invited to a city should be given a church where they can conduct services.¹⁰ The twenty-first canon states

Cordoba would have been of assistance to the Emperor. With the same, we might say openly, ecclesiastical-political goal, this issue was placed on the agenda of the Council of Nicaea. Nevertheless, the fact is that neither the 1st canon from the Council of Arles nor the subsequent decision of the Council of Nicaea regarding the problem of the celebration of Pascha brought the expected unity, and that differences in the setting of Easter Sunday persisted in the Church for several decades after these councils, especially on the territories far away from Rome and Constantinople, the best examples being Ireland and Britain.

⁷ Canons of Council in Elvira: 1; 18; 71; etc.

⁸ This canon is a part of the previously mentioned 15th canon from the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea.

⁹ This canon is related to the 15th canon from the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea.

¹⁰ After the 17th canon from this council, which prohibits holding services in another's diocese, this canon could merely warn that a bishop may conduct Liturgy in another's diocese only if he receives blessing, and that a church should be provided to him for that purpose.

that presbyters and deacons who leave the place of their ordination are allowed to serve in another place, but should desist from further movement. The final, 22nd canon states that those who apostatized and do not wish to repent, but who, having fallen ill, should desire to return to their fellowship on their deathbed, should be restored only if they sincerely repent.¹¹

5. The possible influence of Hosius of Cordoba on the adoption of canons at the councils of Elvira, Arles and Nicaea

The leading personage of the Council of Elvira and the second signatory on the list of canons was Hosius, Bishop of Cordoba,¹² who – as the main representative of the Church in the West – also attended the First Ecumenical Council convened by Emperor Constantine the Great. It should be emphasized that Hosius served as a bishop of Christ's Church for about sixty years and privy to the writing of the canons at the Council of Elvira, and that he may have applied this experience to the writing of the canons of the Council of Nicaea. In this article, we researched only twenty years of Hosius activity in the Church. In that period, Hosius of Cordoba was an influential person, being a prominent bishop and associate of the Emperor (Popović 2015, 105), especially at the councils (Elvira and Nicaea). We can thus infer Hosius' advice to Constantine from the canons from these councils, as well as the course of preparation for determining the agenda of the Council of Nicaea at the imperial court. We can at least partially ascribe to Hosius' influence the Emperor's intent to establish peace in the Church throughout the Empire. Hosius was a link between the persecuted Church and the Church that became a part of the Emperor's policy, but also a link between local traditions and the Tradition from the Ecumenical Council. He was a great defender of the Nicene faith. Nevertheless, near the end of his life he signed the Arian creed, in accordance with the change of religious policy of Constantine's successors, and died soon after (in 358), at 100 years of age.

¹¹ This canon is linked with several canons from the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea.

¹² He was born approximately in 256 and died in 358, either in Sirmium or in Spain. According to Morse (1911, 496), he suffered persecution as a young man under Maximinus, while according to Hefele he was persecuted during Diocletian's time, which was further elaborated by Lietzmann et al. (1979, 570). He was chirotonized as the Bishop of Cordoba in 295. His name was second on the list of bishops that signed the canons of the Council of Elvira. In several places in their previously mentioned book, Leclercq and Hefele clearly show that Hosius was a very close associate of Emperor Constantine between 313 and 324, as well as the emperor's adviser in the dispute with the Donatists. Hosius was an intermediary in the Arian dispute and helped the emperor in resolving the dispute, as evidenced in many letters. Hosius presided over the Council of Nicaea, begging the question – why Hosius? Gelasius of Cyzicus claims that Hosius presided in the name of the pope of Rome, and that he was assisted by papal legates, as per Hefele. (1965, 758)

6. Conclusion

Preparations for the First Ecumenical Council were long in the whole Empire. All the canons from the local councils, both in the East and in the West, may be viewed as preparatory, since Emperor Constantine wanted peace – *pax Romana* – within the whole Church to contribute to unity of thought in the Empire. Thus, the conception of this research was to use analogy to establish the possible influence of participants of earlier councils, primarily in the West – due to the indirect or direct participation of Hosius of Cordoba on the decisions brought at a larger and universally binding council. In both the East and the West of the Empire, councils were convened to deal with major problems affecting the Church (heresies and schisms) and resolve burning questions. Thus, the decisions had to be generally binding, first for the local community, and then for larger regions. Naturally, this was the way in which the Tradition, that applied to the resolution of all the problems of the Church – whether disciplinary or dogmatic – was developed. Unification of decisions and creation of a final position on given questions was reserved solely for the ecumenical councils, and this was something that was recognized by the Emperor. That is why it is very interesting to analyze and connect the canons from earlier – local – councils with decisions brought at the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea. One could say that traditions were developed independently, both in the East and West, and created the Tradition. However, how would one determine why were the same questions and problems considered on the councils that were participated by the same persons? Consequently, it is of great importance to identify a person that was a common link between as many local councils as possible, one that might have been privy to the way in which decisions were made at them, so that he might as concisely and clearly as possible advise the Emperor regarding what should be taken from the local and adopted at the ecumenical level. That person in this research may have been Hosius of Cordoba, an important and respected personage, both in the Church and the imperial court, someone able to influence, both from the political and the ecclesiastical-hierarchical aspects, the making of decisions that would become generally binding for the entire Church.

Inductive reasoning in the research is reasoning in which the premises (analogy of the canons and Hosius of Cordoba) are viewed as supplying evidence for the veracity of the conclusion in the text. Finally, the premises are analogy of canons from the Councils of Elvira and Arles with canons from the Council of Nicaea and the possibility that analogy of canons, brought at the mentioned councils, could offer Bishop Hosius of Cordoba as a common denominator.

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