

Safeguarding The Church from Apostacy: Lessons from Ecumenical Councils and Modern Parallels (A Focus on Osun State, Nigeria)

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Abstract—The corrections of heresies are still a lesson even in the present day, in the presence of the present-day confusion of doctrines, the imports of the first Nicaea Council, and its 1700th anniversary. The present-day church in the world and more so the emerging Pentecostal movement in the sub-Saharan Africa is faced with another set of issues that rings back the fourth century in history. This has made such churches, and more so, Pentecostal churches, a strong religious and socio-political institution in Nigeria and in the Osun State in Nigeria. But this is living is slowly being worn away through inner unrest, theological inconsistency and shallow dogma. Some of the major issues that are high on the agenda are the rise of apostasy that implies the intentional abandonment or distortion of core doctrines in Christianity. The trend is typically compounded with the popularization of the so-called prosperity gospel, which makes a business of the concept of divine blessings and elevates faithfulness to the same status of wealthiness. Moreover, unchecked charismatic leadership has also led to personality cults whereby pastors are the unquestioned spiritual leaders and they are therefore replacing the Scripture and ecclesial accountability. Theological ambiguity, emotional sensualism and spiritual consumerism is replacing biblical literacy and sound doctrine and too many believers are getting exposed to disillusionment and theological confusion. These problems are enhanced by several structural inadequacies within the Osun State like ineffective governance structures in the churches, low degree of theological training to ministers and the lack of ecumenical regional supervision. What is produced as a consequence is an ecclesiastical ecosystem in which doctrinal drifting and leadership abuse can be left to play unchecked. Otherwise, besides risking the faithfulness of the congregation in question it puts at risk the credibility as well as the theological integrity of the whole Pentecostal witness in Nigeria on the whole. This re-evaluation of the legacy of the Council of Nicaea in this

regard is not merely a ritualism but is in fact an ecclesiological strategic requirement. The rationale of concealability of the early church, the consistency of the doctrine, the communal responsibility of the ecclesial community and the fidelity of the credo furnishes the practical prudence to the Pentecostal rulers who desire to oppose the apostasy and reform their theological foundations. Such contextual measures as the creation of localised creeds, the creation of regional councils to restrain the doctrines and the institutionalisation of systematic theological training of the pastors are significant milestones to the ecclesial wellbeing and survival.

Index Terms—Safeguarding, Apostacy, Ecumenical Council, Modern Parallels Word Count: 417

I. INTRODUCTION

The celebration of the 1700th anniversary of the First Ecumenical Council took place on 20th of May, 2025 as a commemoration of the first ecumenical council, commonly known as the Council of Nicaea (325 AD). The commemoration included so many activities such as study day on the document “Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior,” which took place on May 20, 2025 at Pontifical Urban University, located at Urbano VIII, 16, Rome, just outside St. Peters’ Basilica and the Vatican wall, within the auditorium of Saint John Paul II. There was also a webinar on “The Creed as lived Reality,” on October 15, 2025, which was hosted by Society of Ecumenical Studies. The main focus was to explore the importance of the Nicene Creeds in modern Christian Life (ITC; PCPCU).

In Latin America and in the Caribbean, there was also Nicaea 1700 Years Conference. For instance, events were held in the city of Guatemala from 1st to 3rd of

July, 2025, with about eighty (80) participants from over fifteen (15) countries. There was also Global Ecumenical Theological Institute (GETI), which was held in conjunction with the World Conference on Faith and Order, with the purpose of nurturing emerging ecumenical theologians, including Webinar on “Nicaea and the Peace. Witness of the Church on July 15, 2025. The host was the World Council of Churches (WCC).

The Key speakers and participants at the Nicaea 1700 anniversary include Pope Francis II who reiterated on the importance of faith in Jesus Christ as proclaimed at Nicaea; Bishop Mike Royal who stood in for all the churches in England, with the highlight of his paper on the “Relevance of Nicene Creeds in Modern Times; Rev Dr Susan Durber stood for the President of the World Council of Churches for Europe and he spoke on the significance of the Nicaea; Elliot Vanstone represented the Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales, with a focus on the anniversary implications for Christian unity; Rowena Liverance shared reflections on the Council of Nicaea from the Quaker tradition; while Fr. Michael Lambros from the Coptic Orthodox Parish Priests, reflected on the Council’s significance (WCC).

The first council which took place at Nicaea (Turkey) in 325 A.D was not only a moment of historical reflection, but also a profound opportunity for theological introspection, ecclesiastical renewal, and strategic reformation within contemporary Christianity. The all-time historic Nicaea Council was convened under the patronage of Emperor Constantine, and it marked a decisive turning point in Christian history. It addressed critical doctrinal controversies, particularly the Arian denial of Christ’s divinity. Pope Sylvanus I was the pope, but he only sent legates, while Athanasius of Alexandria was also present as a church leader (Co-Plot/AI).

Arianism, named after its proponent, Arius (256 – 336 CE), was a Christological doctrine that rejects the traditional notion of the Trinity and further teaches that Jesus was created by God and is therefore distinct from God. This teaching was considered as a heretic doctrine by most mainstream branches of Christianity (Witherington, 2007: 241).

Arianism teaches that Jesus is not co-eternal with the Father (Berndt & Steinacher, 2014: 1-20); asserts a

total dissimilarity between the Son and the Father and strongly opposed to Homoousian Christians regarding the nature of Trinity and the nature of Christ (Phan, 2011: 75-130).

Kohler Kaufmann & Krauss Samuel, 2012 have this to say on Arianism:

“Arianism, the doctrine of Arius (d. 336), denying the divinity of Christ, was adopted by most of the Germanic tribes – the Visigoths, Ostrogoths, Vandals, Suevi, and Lombards. The Jews under Arian rule were treated with comparative mildness, in contrast to harsh measures of the Catholic emperors and bishops.”

The first Council paved the way for the popular Nicene Creed, a foundational statement of faith that articulated the full divinity of Jesus Christ and safeguarded the unity of the early Church (Ayes, 2004: 13-40; González, 2010: 163-180). The first Council placed emphasis on Christological clarity, ecclesiastical unity, and the rejection of theological error. The second Council also drew attention to the importance of Homoousion which by interpretation means, Christ is the same in being with the father and same in essence (Bethune-Baker, 2004: 1901).

Succinctly, below is the outcome, popularly known as the Acts of the Ecumenical Council of Nicaea in 325 AD, buttressed at the Council of Constantinople in 381 AD and at the Council of Chalcedon in 451 AD, popularly known as the Nicene Creed. Johnson (2010) put it this way:

“We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit, he became incarnate from Virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father (and the Son), who with the

Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen”

Historical in-depth of the various Ecumenical Councils from Nicaea I to Vatican II

There have been series of ecumenical councils before and after the 1st Council at Nicaea. The one that preceded the council of Nicaea was the council at Jerusalem in 50 AD. This was conducted without any papacy authority, but under the distinguished church leaders such as James, Peter and Paul. The focus was to deliberate on whether or not the Gentile converts should be deeply involved in Mosaic law and practices which include circumcision and dietary rules. There have been several other councils after the Nicaea council. They are in the following order:

The first (1st) council at Constantinople in 381 AD. It took place during the reign of Pope Damasus I; all Eastern bishops were present and the council was presided by Meletius of Antioch and Emperor Gregory of Nazianzus and later by Nectarius of Constantinople. The council affirmed Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, canons on episcopal jurisdiction, disciplinary measures, condemnation of heresies, rules of bishop's transfer and recognition of Constantinople as “New Rome” (Tanner, 1990: 23-35)

The next council was in Ephesus in 431 AD under Pope Celestine I who was represented by Roman delegates; the convener of the council was Theodosius II while Patriarch Cyril of Alexandria Presided. John of Antioch and his Eastern bishops, and Patriarch Nestorius whose teachings were condemned were all present at the council. The central focus was to condemn Nestorianism and to affirm Mary as the Theotokos (the mother of our Lord) (Tanner, 1990: 41-55).

Another council later took place at Chalcedon in 451 AD. Leo I the Great was the Pope, while Emperor Marcian and Patriarch Anatolius were some strong church leaders who were present. The council passed affirmation on the teaching of Pope Leo Tome dualism of Christ and also affirmed equally affirmed Constantinople as the “New Rome.” Also, the council condemned and banished Dioscorus, the Patriarch of Alexandria who was deposed for his role in the

“Robber Council” of 449 (Price and Gaddis, 2005: Vol 1. Pp 1-150; Vol 2. Pp; Vol 3. Pp 401 650).

The next council was the second council at Constantinople in 553 AD under Pope Vigilius. The church leaders then include Emperor Justinian I; the council condemned the “three chapters” that were traced to Nestorian Sympathizers. On the other hand, the council upheld the two natures of Christ in one person, the imperial role in doctrinal enforcement and (Price, 2009: 30-40, 285-300).

The following council also took place and it was the 3rd Council at Constantinople between 680 and 681 AD. Agatho was the Pope of the time, while notable church leaders such as Emperor Constantine IV and Patriarch George I were in attendance. The focus was to discredit Monothelism, which suggests that Christ has only one will, but to affirm Dyothelitism, which teaches that Christ has two wills, a divine will and a human will, perfectly united and never in conflict Price, 2010: 1-50)

Another council was the 2nd Council at Nicaea in 787. Hadrian I was the Pope; while Empress Irene and Patriarch Tarasius were some of the State leaders in attendance. The focus was to debate on the veneration of icons with regards to “Iconoclasm” (a deliberate attitude of destroying images, icons and objects that are attached to religious worship) (Noble, 2009: 71-120).

There was also the 4th council at Constantinople between 869 AD and 870 AD under Pope Adrian II. Emperor Basil I and Patriarch Ignatius were present to represent the State. The purpose of the council was to address the schism with Patriarch Photius. Photian schism was a major 9th century conflict between the Eastern (Byzantine) and Western (Roman) churches, centered on the legitimacy of Patriarch Photius I of Constantinople, which surrounds his theological and political views (Tanner, 2015: 167-190).

The consecutive councils took place in Rome with the tag Lateran Council 1, 2, 3, and 4 in 1123 AD, 1139 AD, 1179 AD and 1215 AD. Pope Callistus II and the Western Bishops were in attendance at Lateran Council 1. This council put an end to investiture controversy such as church versus secular leaders. Pope Innocent II and Bernard of Clairvaux were in attendance at Lateran 2; the purpose of the council was to condemn Arnold of Brescia and to enforce clerical

discipline. At Lateran 3, Pope Alexander III, including Bishops of Europe were present with the aims to set rules for Papal elections (two-thirds majority). At Lateran 4, Pope Innocent III, Bishops and theologians were present, purposely to defend transubstantiation; mandated annual confession and communion (Tanner, 2015: 191-223).

Next to Lateran councils are councils of Lyons (France) I and 2 in 1245 and 1274. At Lyons 1, Pope Innocent IV was the pope of the time while Bishops and Emperor Fredrick II were in attendance. The purpose was on how to depose Emperor Fredrick and also to address the reform of the church. At Lyons 2, Pope Gregory X, Michael VIII and Palaiologos (Byzantine Emperor) were in attendance. The central focus was to discuss reunion with Eastern church (Melloni, 2023: 152).

The next council was the council of Vienne which took place in Vienne (France) between 1311 and 1312. Pope Clement V, Bishops and King Philip IV of France were present. The discussion focused largely on how to suppress Knights Templar (Marembon, 23: 87). Next was the council at Constance in Germany between 1414 and 1418. Pope Martin V was elected during this council. There were Bishops and Emperor Sigismund in attendance. The main purpose of the council was to discuss how to put an end to Western schism and to condemn Jan Hus (Stump, 2023: 215).

Council of Florence was the next council from 1431 to 1445 at Florence, Italy. Pope Eugene IV was the pope at the time, while church leaders like Byzantine Emperor John VIII and Patriarch Joseph II were in attendance. The purpose of the council was to discuss reunion with Eastern Orthodox (Crean, 2023: 215).

In a bid to overturn the activities of the Protestants, the Roman Catholic church came up with the council of Trent in Italy between 1545 and 1563. This took place under three Popes in successive order; Pope Paul III, Pope Julius III and Pius IV. There were many Bishops and theologians in attendance. The efforts were centered around counter-reformation and the clarifications of Catholic doctrines and discipline (Minnich, 2023; 145).

The subsequent councils were the first Vatican council from 1869 to 1870 and the second Vatican council from 1962 to 1965. The first Vatican council took place in Vatican City under Pope Pius IX, in the

presence of Bishops worldwide. The purpose of the council was to define Papal infallibility (Bosschaert, De Mey, & Beentjes, 2023:112). The second Vatican council also took place in Vatican City under Popes John XXIII and Paul VI. The bishops from across the globe were in attendance and the purpose of gathering centered on modernized liturgy; promotion of ecumenism and dialogue with modern world (Cifford, Colberg, Faagioli, & Hannenberg, 2025:210).

In summary, all the ecumenical councils can be basically categorized into three. The first are those councils which fell within the earliest and the ancient era. These are tagged “Early Councils” (Nicaea I, 325 AD – Nicaea II, 787 AD). These mainly addressed Christology, Trinity and Icons (Gemeinhardt, 2023: 145; Senz, 2024:56).

The second category is tagged “Medieval Councils” (Constantinople IV, 869-870 AD – Florence, 1431-1449 AD); these are councils that addressed church discipline, papal and authority, dealing with schisms and attempt on East-West unity (Barret, 2024: 89; Bellitto, 2023: 134).

The third category is “Modern Councils” (Trent, 1545-1663 AD – Vatican I, & II, 1869-1965 AD). These councils purposely responded to Protestant Reformation and modern challenges with the mindset of changing Catholicism in its entirety (Senz, 2024: 56; Minnich, 2023: 145).

The Uniqueness of Churches in Osun State, Nigeria and the need to reduce Apostacy to the Barest Minimum

The relevance of doctrinal clarity and structured ecclesiastical leadership becomes especially pressing when examined within the specific cultural and religious landscape of Osun State, a predominantly Yoruba-speaking region in southwestern Nigeria. Yet, Pentecostalism in Osun has experienced growth throughout the past few decades, with churches like the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), Assemblies of God in Nigeria, Living Faith Church (Winners Chapel), Christ Apostolic Church (CAC), and a plethora of independent charismatic ministries having taken centre stage in the lives of the local communities in terms of spiritual, social, and political influence. Although they have grown and become influential, these churches are not exempt of the internal crises that afflict Nigerian Pentecostalism as a

whole. One such issue that has been witnessed in the region is the leadership conflicts and a succession crisis especially in the case of founder-led churches wherein there are poor governance structures or records. One elder in a congregation of one of the major Pentecostal churches in Osogbo told me:

“We also had a succession issue when our founder became incapacitated. There were those pastors who felt that the eldest son ought to assume the position and those who felt that the most senior minister ought to be the one to replace him. This divided our leadership in the meantime. It would have been prevented through straightforward bylaws and shared leadership.”

The testimony is a typical predicament within Pentecostal ecclesiology where there exist no institutional structures of transition and accountability, particularly when charismatic leadership is idolised in the name of organisational values. Also, these leadership challenges are usually compounded by social-cultural aspects, such as ethnic affiliations, kinship loyalties, and local politics. In other cases, the leadership positions are not only fought based on the spiritual qualifications but also based on ethnic or community-based factor, which creates factionalism and animosity. This localism compromises the ecclesial unity and creates the circumstances in which the decisions on the doctrines can be affected more by personal or political interests than theological loyalty.

Financial transparency and centralised doctrinal oversight are also problematic in most of the independent churches. And though in larger denominations such as RCCG and Winners Chapel, there exist standardised pastoral deployment and reporting systems. Many of these less known Pentecostal churches in Osun lack clarity of financial audit, codes of conduct, as well as theological review boards. In such settings, the church finances can be easily manipulated by the one who established it or the pastor who is in control, and this will raise the chances of abuse, distrust and eventual disillusionment of the members. Under these facts, Osun State is a microcosm of the bigger Pentecostal world in Nigeria, full of life, powerful, but structurally susceptible. This weakness highlights the necessity of ecclesiastical reforms, which are regionally based and which makes use of indigenous realities and historical Christian tradition. Using the teachings of the Council of Nicaea,

including the faith that is spiritual and organisational maturity.

II. SAFEGUARDING NIGERIAN CHURCH FROM APOSTACY WITH THE LENSES OF ECUMENICAL COUNCILS

The apostasy phenomenon, which can be interpreted as the voluntary abandonment of the basic Christian beliefs and moral standards, has become more observable in the segments of the Nigerian Pentecostal movement. Even though the Pentecostalism has been extolled as a result of its evangelical zeal, charismatic energy and youthful popularity, its explosive and largely unregulated expansion has revealed theological and institutional vulnerabilities cloaked in secrecy. Such weaknesses are causing the rapid increase in the level of doctrinal laxity, spiritual disorientation, and, eventually, the loss of connection with the true Christian faith (Ngwoke, 2024; Ukah, 2022). Among the most noticeable theological perversions that promote this trend, there is the abuse of the prosperity gospel. According to this paradigm, divine favour is perceived in the main account of financial prosperity, physical health, and material achievements. The latter theology is frequently presented in terms of selling so-called anointed stuff, in the form of miracle stickers, oils, mantles, and seed-based prayer programs, which are advertised as channels of breakthrough and divine intervention (Smith, 2021). Lack of miracles expected to happen usually leaves believers who are spiritually disappointed and emotionally drained. This commercialization of faith does not just discredit the grace-based message of the gospel, but it also discredits ecclesial authority and theology as such (Gifford, 2020).

Besides theological drift, there has been a problem of governance related crisis in Pentecostal churches which has worsened the problem. Most congregations do not have a formal constitution or leadership succession plan, and when a founding pastor falls ill, dies, or retires, power struggles usually occur. Ethnic loyalties or nepotism, or financial gains often mix with these struggles, and they cause divisions in congregations and undermine the institutional structure of the church (Unachukwu, 2024). Osun State like any other state in the country has

experienced high profile church splits and internal schisms as a result of such conflicts and this has complicated the lives of the believers who are in need of a stable and spiritual direction. Worst still, there is the rise of personality cults around charismatic church leaders who are usually given titles like Papa, daddy or general overseer. Spiritual mentorship is biblically profound, but its abuse in authoritarian systems has caused unchecked pastoral domination where individual revelations and subjective experiences, in most cases, take the place of the biblical interpretation (Ngwoke, 2024; Ojo, 2023). This relationship encourages spiritual interdependence, restricts theological searching, and creates emotionally-manipulated congregants as opposed to theologically-formed congregants.

The testimonies that have been recorded on the social media platforms like Reddit and Christian blog forums, among others, show how this emotionalism, combined with theatrical demonstrations, can lead to burnout, disillusionment and even leaving the church (Ukah, 2022). Combined, materialisation of faith, instability of government and charismatic authoritarianism leads to an increasing pattern of silent apostasy among the Nigerian Pentecostalism. It is worth noting that this type of apostasy is hardly ever a complete abandonment of Christianity. Instead, it is an indication of a betrayal in the integrity and theological richness of the institutional church. The Pentecostal experience in Nigeria is no longer a source that provides the disaffected believers with spiritual sustenance, clarity of doctrines, and moral accountability which is essential to long-term discipleship.

When dealing with this crisis, the Pentecostal churches especially Osun State must redefine themselves on historic Christian orthodoxy, open governance and biblically based leadership. The model of this process is the First Ecumenical Council of the State of 324 which was of great historical and theological interest. Its creedal unity, theological accuracy, and mutual supervision provides a plausible model of rejecting theological dispersion and curbing apostasy in a modern environment (Ayres, 2004; Gonzalez, 2010). The by reconsidering and amending these initial principles of the conciliations, Nigerian

Pentecostalism can start to take a more stable, plausible, and formative spiritual turn.

III. STRATEGIC APPROACHES TO PREVENTING APOSTACY IN OSUN STATE PENTECOSTAL CHURCHES

Based on the historical lessons of the Council of Nicaea and the modern ecclesiastical issues of the Pentecostal churches in the Osun State, this section offers practical strategies that are context-sensitive to foster doctrinal purity, morality leadership, and institutional strength. These strategic measures are not aimed at directly imitating the models of early Christianity, but to intelligently adapt their principles, the elegance of the creed, conciliatory leadership and ethical supervision to the reality of life of the contemporary Nigerian Pentecostal church.

1. Creation of a Regional Pentecostal Council (RPC)
In order to promote theological solidarity and institutional cooperation, leaders of Pentecostal congregations in Osun State ought to establish a Regional Pentecostal Council (RPC), which is a voluntary, interdenominational, and Council of Nicaea-like structure. Each year, the representatives of major denominations (e.g., RCCG, AGN, CAC, MFM, Winners' Chapel), other independent ministries, and theological educators would be able to meet at this council. Some of the important functions would be:

Drafting and adopting of a State-wide Pentecostal Creed based on biblical orthodoxy and contextualized to Nigerian realities. This confession would document the Trinitarian character of God, the competence and adequacy of Scripture, the pre-eminence of the atoning work of Christ, the moral duty of spiritual leadership. Inter-church dialogue, discernment in doctrine and mediation of inter-conflicts would also be facilitated by such Creed and thus theological fragmentation would be minimized and inter-ministerial collaboration would be enhanced.

2. Creation of a Doctrinal and Ethical Oversight Council

Along with the Regional Pentecostal Council (RPC), it should be supplemented with a Council of Elders consisting of more experienced ministers, theological scholars and respected people of the community to

offer spiritual, doctrinal and ethical guidance. It is a body that would be done on a rotational leadership basis to avoid monopoly of power and promote shared responsibilities. Its duties would encompass: Moral and theological counseling on new doctrines, teachings or ethical crises among Pentecostal community. It will as well offer oversight role in governance and practice of the church which includes; periodic financial audit in the effort to maximise transparency, and restore popular faith and also supervision in succession planning to prevent factionalism as well as continuity in the ecclesia. Through the institutionalisation of oversight, churches of the Pentecostal denomination in the Osun State will be able to transform the ministries of personality oriented to theologically responsible communities of faith.

3. Leadership Training and Theological Formation

It is important to note that apostasy is caused by in most cases lack of depth in theological foundation and leadership; inadequacies, whereby there is need to invest into regional leadership capacity-building programs. This ought to include: Governance workshops and pastoral development seminars dealing with Biblical patterns of servant leadership (cf. Matthew 20:25-28), Nicene patterns of ecclesiastical accountability, and Conflict resolution and ethical decision-making in ministry.

Theological education can be done through partnership with reputable seminaries and Christian universities in the area including Joseph Ayo Babalola University, Redeemer University that have offered short courses of certification to pastors and lay leaders. These would assist in closing the divide between the spiritual charisma and theological competence and curb the reliance on the ministry models based on emotions.

4. Congregational and Public Accountability Mechanisms

Finally, apostasy and church corruption may be reduced by introducing transparent systems of governance at the congregational level. Churches are supposed to be encouraged but not compelled by the charter of the association to: Publish annual ethical and financial reports, including income, expenditure, welfare allocation and charitable contribution; they should also put in place internal grievance redressal

mechanisms and external accountability channels (e.g., ombudsmen, regional ethics boards), where their members can freely report misconduct, financial abuse or deviations in their doctrines. Such processes will facilitate trust, empowerment of congregants and a situation that will make the spiritual leaders accountable to Scripture and the community they serve. These strategies will enable the Pentecostal churches in Osun State to create a new culture of ecclesiastical maturity that will prevent the deviation of doctrines, encourage shared leadership, and restore the spiritual wellbeing of the Pentecostal movement in Nigeria. By so doing, the legacy of the Council of Nicea would no longer remain as a historical event, but an active model of ecclesial renewal in the 21st century.

IV. PERCEIVED CHALLENGES AND MITIGATION TO STRATEGIES

Implementing a structured, regionally coordinated response to apostasy through doctrinal councils and ethical oversight will inevitably encounter several contextual challenges. However, with deliberate framing and strategic partnerships, these barriers can be addressed effectively.

1. Resistance to Formal Structures

Among the most significant obstacles is the probable opposition of leaders of independent Pentecostal churches who can view the conciliar examples or ecumenical structures as the possible threats to their ecclesiastical sovereignty. Its historical meaning of ecumenism can also raise eyebrows, especially in a group of people who associate it to compromising of the dogma. Mitigation Strategy: To ease resistance, the advocates might present such structures as not impositions but rather as biblically balanced manifestations of stewardship, accountability, and cohesiveness (cf. Acts 15; Ephesians 4:1-6). Buy-in can be achieved by focusing on voluntary participation and theological fidelity instead of institutional control.

2. Resource and Capacity Gaps

Smaller and rural-based churches might have no administrative, financial, or educational capacity to participate actively in training programs, audits, or regional councils. Mitigation Plan: Strategic alliances with theological churches, denominational

headquarters and the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN) may provide subsidized training, resource sharing and logistic assistance. There can be collaboration sites whereby size and socioeconomic status does not restrict participation.

3. Enforcement Limitations

Lack of legal enforcement devices, the regional councils may find it difficult to drive compliance or rectify access to p, shared platforms where visibility and ministry growth and inclusion can be experienced and incorporated into regional consultative forums with policymakers or fellow faith communities. Establishing an environment where adherence with the council can be linked with credibility and development might be more effective than coercion.

V. EXPECTED BENEFITS

Nevertheless, the potential outcomes of a doctrine-based, systematic project to Pentecostal churches in Osun State are immense in the long term. These benefits do not just have an internal health impact, but they also have an ecclesial implication to the nationwide religious solidarity.

1. Doctrinal Unity and Stability

The suggested initiative would reduce the threat of theological drift, sectarian innovations, and syncretism by affirming to a shared, localised creed based on biblical orthodoxy. The continuity, theological confidence and multi-generational spiritual in-depths are the results of a stable doctrinal foundation.

2. Strengthened Leadership Ethics

Formation of supervisory institutions like councils of elders and doctrinal review boards would encourage moral uprightness, dishearten autocratic leadership and provide avenues of moral responsibility. This moral re-charge is essential in restoring confidence among the people in Pentecostal ministry.

3. Apostasy Prevention and Spiritual Retention

Spiritual disillusionment and apostasy are minimised when pastors and congregants are prepared with good theological teaching and open conduct of governance. An educated laity is not as prone to deception, exploitation, or confusion by the doctrines.

4. Replicable Model for Wider Application

In case the Osun model would be effective, it can be used as an example in other parts in Nigeria. The project would set an example of like state or geo-political Pentecostal councils, and the ecclesial responsibility and reform would be awakened nationally. It can also strengthen the function of Pentecostalism in the long run in interfaith dialogue, national ethics and peace-building efforts. The Significance of the 1700 th anniversary of Ecumenical Councils to the Global, National and Churches in Osun State in Particular.

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First, its significance on the doctrine front introduces the background behind the affirmation of the divinity of Christ by renouncing Arianism doctrine (which rejected the complete divinity of Christ). The theological basis of the doctrine of Trinity similar to Christian Faith was also approved and set by the doctrinal significance. Second, it is important historically in the sense that even though Nicaea Council (325 AD) was the earliest ecumenical Council in the Christian history, later Council at Constantinople (381 AD) strengthened and solidified the Nicene Creed that has since been the universal confession of faith among Catholic, Orthodox and most of the Pentecostal believers. Fourth, it possessed ecumenical effects of confirming the unity of the Christians, promoting dialogue between the separating Christian populations, coinciding common Easter in 2025 between the Eastern and the Western Church, which highly symbolized the worship and unity.

Also, it has global effects including renewed hope that goes along with 2025 Jubilee Year: “Christ our Hope. The anniversary also created a platform through which there could be discussions on how to end centuries of divisions between churches. It also promoted discussion of the concerns about the world peace, justice and care of the creation. It was the anniversary that assisted to bridge common faith like adoption and recitation of Nicene Creed in catholic, Orthodox and certain Protestant churches. In these, the Christians will be in a good position to effectively witness Christ in this fragmented world.

VI. CONCLUSION

The 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicea turns out to be more than a historical memory as it provides an example of how theology should be restructured and the church strengthened. It challenges Pentecostal churches in Osun State and beyond to stand against the tide of sensationalism, the affirmation of the truths of historic Christian orthodoxy and the re-establishing of their ministries on Scripture and Spirit-led uprightness. Thus, the celebration will be a springboard to renewal of Nigerian Pentecostalism over the long term and a prototype of world Pentecostal interaction with theological tradition.

The council of Nigeria 1700th anniversary is much more than a historical celebration thing it is a timely catalyst of ecclesiastical revitalization, theological revival and structural reformation in the Nigerian Pentecostalism. With doctrinal ambiguity, leadership fragmentation and spiritual disillusionment becoming a major challenge to the Pentecostal movement especially in areas like Osun State, the legacy of Nicea inspires and provides guidance. Pentecostal churches in Osun have a desperate chance of re-aligning their ecclesiology by adopting the ecumenical wisdom of the early Church of a collective confession, through shared leadership, and theological responsibility.

The offered creation of Regional Pentecostal Councils, the structures of doctrinal oversight, system of ethical accountability, and training programs of leadership is not just a mere theoretical exercise. It is an empirical and contextually relevant reaction to the increasing menace of apostasy and institutional drift. These reforms will not only help to protect the purity of the doctrine and provide missionally effective leadership, applied faithfully, they will also make the Pentecostal churches appear credible and mature. By so doing, Osun State would be an exemplar of a model that can be replicated nationwide to show that Pentecostalism is not necessarily anti-institutional, but it may develop into a Spirit-empowered and structurally sound movement. This is why the anniversary of Nicea should be more than a mere living event: to celebrate the theological foundations of the early Church but also to make the bold move of creating a new Pentecostal presence: biblically sound, ethically

responsible, and resilient to the currents of apostasy in 21 st -century Nigeria.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Lessons that the 1700th ecumenical anniversary teaches churches in Nigeria and specifically the Osun State include the following. They are:

Dialogue: Dialogue is the first recommendable. The unification of the church leaders and the believers is highly stressed out in an ecumenical Council to enable them know the truth collectively. Thus, Nigerian Churches and the Osun State in particular must adopt ecumenical dialogue by collaborating across the denominations in solving challenges such as poverty, education and peacebuilding. The discussions of the different Ecumenical Councils were not just intellectual making of theological decisions, but an intense quest of unity in Christ (Speaker 1). They were countless occasions, when hardship is necessary, that tried together, by discussion, questions of doctrine, identity, and practice, and by prayer and judgment, provided insight which lives with us to this day (2). The different Councils exposed that unity is not the sameness, but diversity of cultures and traditions makes the church rich and that the church should not be out of the common confessing of faith, all through (3). Hence, Christians in Christianity in Nigeria and Osun State specifically, should not simply read historical matters but make them a way of life, as the councils call on us that faith must be preached in every generation, the church of our day must invest in education, preaching to the people through digital media and care, therefore that the message of Christ may reach the hearts of the people in the world (4).

Doctrinal Clarity: The second suggestion is that of Doctrinal Clarity. The anniversary of Nicea Council was a celebration of the doctrinal clarity of divinity of Christ against Arianism that actually urged the church to speak with one voice regarding the subject matter. As such the church in Nigeria and especially Osun State should be well directed, guarded, teachings healthy, and give clear catechesis to the believers in a place where the gospel is being perverted by prosperity gospel, syncretism and misguidance in doctrines. The councils were held specifically to overcome the doctrinal wrangles and preserve the faith. Their legacies reveal that understanding of teaching is not a

choice, but so critical to unity and mission. Hence, the anniversary remind the faithful that the clarity of the doctrines is a gift and not a burden. We would suggest that on the 1700th anniversary of the ecumenical councils we church should reaffirm its desire to be clear in its teaching. Just as the councils in the past were defending the truth of the Gospel, so must we do it now with a conviction, accuracy, and charity. May we remember this anniversary by inspiring catechesis and dialogue and witness, so that the faith may be evident in all generations (Copilot, personal communication, January 27, 2026).

Outreach and Witnessing: The third one is that Nigerian Church, particularly, in the Osun State must adopt the spirit of outreach and witnessing that had been embraced by the Ecumenical Councils. Other than the determinations of Nicaea that defined not only theology, but also the publicity of the church in the Roman Empire; Nigerian church must affect politics, culture and social life. The Osun State church too must exercise their influence in a responsible manner in order to preach justice, peace and care towards the vulnerable instead of division or exploitation.

Unity in Diversity: The fourth lesson is that the church in Nigeria and the Osun State in particular must learn the lesson of unity in diversity as taught in the 1700th Ecumenical Council. This is due to the fact that there were numerous bishops not only in the Christian global community but also people in different cultural, language and various political groups converged at the anniversary and it was considered to be a big success. Churches in Nigeria and Osun State especially are categorized in terms of their denominations like Catholic, Anglican, Pentecostal and African Indigenous churches. Such churches will have an opportunity to understand how to be united in diversity and focus more on a common faith in Christ than divisions, particularly in places where Christianity is intertwined with Islam and indigenous religions.

Collaboration, not Competition: The fifth lesson that the anniversary demanded is collaboration as opposed to competition. As such, the church in Nigeria and in Osun State must follow this lesson by always keeping the spirit of inclusiveness rather than exclusiveness and competition spirit.

Hope and Renewal: Furthermore, the church in Nigeria and Osun State in particular should learn the lesson of hope and renewal that the Ecumenical Councils presented. The 1700th anniversary coincides with a shared Easter date in 2025 for East and West, which symbolized unity. The contemporary churches should remember that Christ is the center of hope and not denominational identity. Therefore, it is an opportunity to renew commitment to living out the Nicene Creed in daily life. Osun is a state with religious plurality and cultural richness. The councils remind churches that their mission is not only inward (doctrine, worship) but outward, that is to be salt and light in society. By learning from Nicaea and others, churches can become agents of unity, truth, and hope in Nigeria.

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