

Could Pope Francis Call for a New Nicene Council in 2025? Why It's a Bad Idea

Since Pope Francis' meeting with Orthodox Patriarch Bartholomew earlier in June, there have been whispers that a new Nicene Council might be in the works for 2025—the 1700th anniversary of the original council.

That first Council of Nicaea set the trajectory for the entire Christian faith—whether Protestant, Catholic, or Orthodox. In A.D. 325, there were a number of important issues pressing the Church, but chief among them was the divinity of Christ. The Council marked a crucial point in ecumenical history where leaders banded together, agreed upon the clear teaching of Scripture, and condemned heresies such as Arianism that undermined Christ's divinity. The landmark council also gave us the Nicene Creed, helping us define the Trinity over the 17 centuries since.

The Council of Nicaea was crucial. But Pope Francis should know—too much of a good thing *isn't* a good thing.

Why not have another council now?

Progressive Catholics and Christians may find the idea exciting, spurred on by the idea that faith and culture have changed far too much since the 4th century to maintain the old ways. Others might be driven to skepticism that the scandal-ridden Catholic Church could possibly unite various traditions under one ecumenical summit.

But is the idea of another Council of Nicaea an innocent one? Probably not.

It's uncertain what might be up for grabs in such a council,

if it is convened at all. Will the Church surrender ground on long-established doctrines concerning the nature of Christ? Highly doubtful. But if the phrase “new Nicene Council” is in the air, chances are there will be some wishing to broaden the borders of orthodoxy.

We already know that historical Christian belief is under attack as never before—not simply on moral or societal issues, but within the walls of the church. For instance, some liberal Christians are attempting to reopen the canon of Scripture and compile apocryphal (not inspired by the Holy Spirit) and pseudepigraphal (falsely attributed books) into a *New “New Testament.”*

Volumes have already been written across the Web about *what* these problems are. The real question—and the question millennials will be forced to answer in the near future—is *why* these are problems at all.

Christianity always was, is, and will be an *historical faith*.

The core of Christianity, the gospel, is not simply a philosophical assertion or theological concept; it is the demonstrable historic fact of Jesus’ life, death, and bodily resurrection. That gospel fact has countless applications, but only one meaning—because it’s anchored in history, not feeling.

The gospel is the good *news*, not a “good idea.”

That means that when Christians of any sect gather on Sunday morning across the globe, they are not bound together by myths, religious practices or philosophies. They are bound together because they all personally know and serve a real, living, breathing person—Jesus Christ (who happens to also be the incarnate God).

The bare-bones historical facts of World War II will never need to be updated. Sure, historians might upwardly revise the

death toll of the Holocaust as new research is uncovered, but in two millennia, no one should ever think to say, "You know, the idea of Hitler killing all the Jews makes sense in the 20th century, but it doesn't make sense today. We need a new World War II." That would be absurd, because World War II happened. Period.

Christianity is the same way.

A Christian faith that rethinks its historic foundations every generation to keep up with the culture ultimately cannot appeal to *any* culture. It becomes irrelevant and useless. It's only the universal, unalterable historical fact of the gospel that means anything to anybody in any culture.

Creeds don't need revision. The canon doesn't need to be reopened. We will always be unraveling, applying and contextualizing the Gospel message, but the banner headline—that God became a human to die and save us—will never become outdated.

If someone thinks Christianity needs to "change" to fit into the 21st century, then their concept of Christianity is not centered on the Gospel.

And if I am a non-Christian watching the Church reconvene at Nicaea, my thought will not be, "My, what a dynamic, relevant faith!" No—it will be, "Perhaps they're starting to realize that they were wrong all along. Maybe they'll come closer to believing my viewpoint instead."

Friends, our faith has only stood for the last 2,000 years—and Judaism before it—because it is based in reality. It is this hard-facts nature of the gospel that has forced men and women across cultures, national borders, and religious backgrounds to make life-and-death decisions about whether or not to submit to the Lord Jesus Christ over the last two millennia. It is that same factual message that will continue to endure and awaken souls to their Maker, because the facts of history

cannot change with culture.

Take heart: your faith is an inexhaustibly relevant historical reality.

No matter how many councils there are.

Alex Kocman is a recent media graduate with a background in biblical studies. A writer and editor for *Christian Life News* and *Charisma News*, he resides in Virginia with his wife. You can follow him on Twitter via @ajkocman.