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# CHAPTER 8: Constantine and the Council of Nicaea (pp. 125-132)

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## I. TERMS:

1. **Ecumenical** – From the Greek word meaning “the inhabited world” (oikoumene), this word signifies universal cooperation of Christians as opposed to regional, cultural, or (now) denominational and traditional cooperation of Christians.
2. **Chi-Rho** – These are the first Greek letters in the name of Christ (Greek Χρῖστος), which was used as a Christian symbol: Chi (X, χ) and Rho (P ρ, ϱ).

## II. READING QUESTIONS:

1. Describe emperor Constantine’s personal religion.

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2. What happened to make Constantine sole ruler of the empire, bringing him “to the centre of gravity of the empire” in the East?

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3. Why did Constantine wish for a council to gather at Ancyra in 325?

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4. Why was the council subsequently moved to Nicaea?

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d. What is “this saving sign” inscribed on the victory statue of Constantine?

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2. When Constantine assumed power, he encouraged and funded the building of churches—not just any churches, but ones worthy of both the dignity of the Christian God and the dignity of Rome. In Eusebius’ *History*, Bk. 10.4 (pp. 306-322), we find a dedication speech by Eusebius himself, which was given for one of these churches built in the region of Tyre (near the see of Eusebius in Caesarea). In this speech we find not only a beautiful “theology of architecture,” so to speak, but also a thesis on how Christian persecution was understood in light of its new, more privileged place under Constantine. Read the given passage above and answer the following questions.

a. To what does Eusebius compare the church building, and by extension the Church, at the beginning of his speech?

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b. How does Eusebius describe the human state before the healing work of Christ?

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c. What biblical analogy does Eusebius make concerning the people of the Church?

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d. What word picture does Eusebius use to describe the persecution, and later peace, of the Church?

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e. What was the design for the entrance of the church meant to recall?

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f. What was the overall adornment of the church meant to symbolize?

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g. To what does the church building “pale” in comparison?

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h. What is the church building overall meant to reflect?

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3. The Downfall of Licinius: 10.8-9 (pp. 328-333)

a. What apparently caused the conflict between Licinius and Constantine?

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b. What vile acts did Licinius commit before going to war with Constantine?

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c. What was the result of this conflict and war?

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#### IV. QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION:

1. Constantine is an oft-debated figure in the history of Christianity. Some have praised him greatly for his work and influence (like Eusebius of Caesarea), some have wished it never happened. Discuss the person and influence of Constantine and evaluate the pros and cons of his role in the history of Christianity.